The Washington Monthly

NOVEMBER 1993/$3.95

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. on a forgotten guru

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Why poverty isn't chic

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John Connally on JFK's last ride

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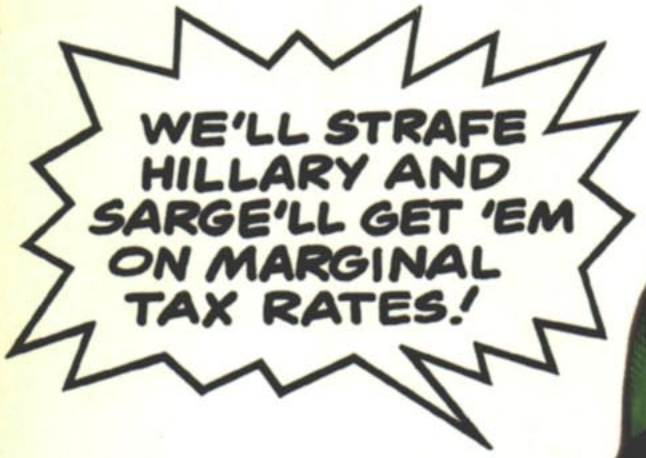
What's Wrong with the Gore report



Is the *Journal*'s editorial page shell shocked or has it simply lost its mind?

By Bill Gifford

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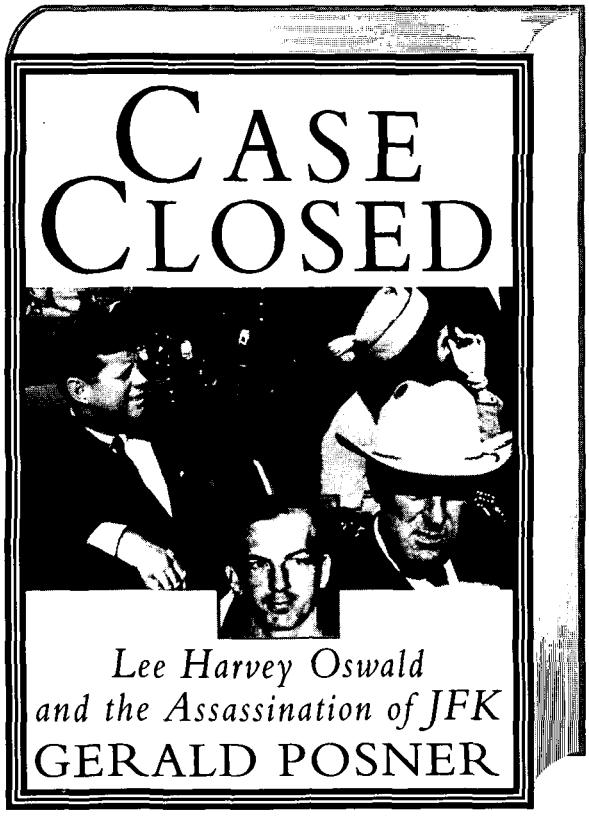

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The Washington Monthly

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Letters

Money Matters

I must disagree with your assertion that the words on our August cover, "Beat the Biggest Tax Hike Ever," were a lie ["Tilting at Windmills," September]. As our article explained, in discussing "the biggest tax hike ever," we were writing about both the taxes in the budget package and the likely tax increases that will be coming to help pay for health reform. Add the two together and you will get the biggest tax hike ever.

Richard Eisenberg
Assistant Managing Editor
Money Magazine
New York, NY

Nightly Business Retort

I was very disappointed with your article ["Stocks, Bonds and Barney," Eric Konigsberg, September], which grossly misstated the facts. The author makes the assertion that "The Nightly Business Report" (NBR) is one of several public television programs that are "subtly anti-labor and anti-tax, due in no small part to the fact that (they) are heavily financed by corporations." Mr. Konigsberg's conclusion is based on inaccurate assumptions.

First, the editorial decision-making at NBR operates independently. The corporations providing underwriting support to "The Nightly Business Report" are not involved in the editorial content of the program. Secondly, Mr. Konigsberg says he bases his opinions about the content of NBR on a single week of viewing, citing comments by two economists who were critical of President Clinton's tax proposals. However, the author ignores the fact that the program has consistently presented a balanced picture of the Clinton plan—with comments from leading administration advocates as well as supporters and critics on Capitol Hill, and from business and labor leaders, economists, and analysts. Some examples:

1. During the author's "single-week's worth of watching 'The Nightly Business Report,'" he must have engaged in selective viewing. He missed the fact that on Friday, May 28, we broadcast an interview segment with *The Washington Monthly*'s own editor in chief, Charles Peters, on estate taxes. Mr. Peters was highly critical of the current exclusion of $600,000 in a family's estate from taxation, calling it "the equivalent of food stamps for the wealthy." Not exactly an "anti-tax" viewpoint.

2. The author points to an NBR program which "was devoted entirely to illuminating the loopholes in existing estate tax." The author appears to be referring to a special NBR program which ran on May 31, Memorial Day, entitled "How to Plan Your Estate (or Inheritance)."

This program was not "devoted" to estate taxes. In fact, recognizing that most families will not be subject to federal estate taxes, the program focused mainly on OTHER aspects of estate planning—how to prepare a will, how the probate system operates and how to choose a trust company.

3. If the author had watched NBR beyond his one week of viewing, he would have seen numerous commentators, analysts, and spokespersons giving pros and cons of the Clinton tax plan as well as labor issues. Robert Reich, U.S. Labor secretary, was a regular commentator on the program before he accepted his current position. Since that time, Mr. Reich has appeared on several occasions as an interview guest to discuss labor and economic issues. NBR regularly covers AFL-CIO meetings, stories on labor contract negotiations, and has devoted several specials and series on labor/management issues.

I take serious issue with a reporter who throw darts about fairness in reporting, but doesn't take the time himself to present a fair and accurate story. We were never contacted for comments about the criticisms leveled before his story went into print. Hardly a balanced or fair approach to reporting.

Linda O'Bryon
Executive Editor
The Nightly Business Report
Miami, FL

Eric Konigsberg replies: *Just because corporations do not sit in on editorial meetings does not mean that the producers of these shows are immune to the influences of the corporate interests that fund them. On the Charles Peters point, NBR reporter Darren Gersh elicited Peters' view that more estates should be taxed than currently are, then dismissed that view as merely "in style" and went on to say why it wouldn't work politically ("Make more people pay the tax and you risk being seen as hitting the middle class. Raise rates on the wealthy and they'll spend more on lawyers and accountants to try to avoid paying the tax"), not why it would be good or bad for the country. And the estate planning show was in fact devoted to finding ways of avoiding estate taxes. (". . . [T]he unlimited marital deduction makes it possible for a husband and wife to pass along any amount to a spouse free of estate taxes. But since spouses don't live forever, that loophole is only temporary. The*

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tax man is standing by to levy the tax upon the spouse's death. But although only $600,000 is exempt from federal estates taxes, there's a widely used way to effectively shelter $1.2 million . . .") Finally, the fact that Robert Reich and other liberals get air time does not mean that the business shows' overall drum beat is not conservative and directed at higher income viewers. As far as contacting the show's producers, I reported the piece by doing what every other public television viewer does—watched the show. And what I found was a rightward and pro-business slant.

Laboring the Point

For a supposedly iconoclastic magazine, Eric Konigsberg's article on PBS is certainly a slavish and unimaginative imitation of left-wing arguments against corporate sponsorship of PBS. Even Konigsberg will only venture that the PBS business lineup is "subtly" biased—something that can't be said for the PBS documentary lineup, in which videocassettes of programs like "Maria's Story" were sold by supporters of El Salvador's communist guerillas as the real story of the FMLN.

Konigsberg should know better than to split "capital" and "labor" shows on PBS like a Marxist. Shows on the stock market do not only appeal to the "2 percent that trade stocks each year," but to the 20 percent of Americans who own them, not to mention many more who might be interested in the fate of millions of dollars in pension funds they will rely on for their retirement. As for "labor," less than 20 percent of the American work force is represented by labor unions, so shows on unions may not be as representative of American workers as "Wall Street Week."

Tim Graham
Associate Editor
Media Research Center
Alexandria, VA

The Up Escalator

In "Tilting at Windmills" [October], you refer to the role of President John F. Kennedy in the Vietnam War. Two of your points deserve careful consideration.

1. While I certainly agree that President Johnson's action in 1965 was a "disastrous escalation," it followed inevitably from the earlier escalation by his predecessor. It was President Kennedy who escalated the number of U.S. military personnel in Vietnam from 700 to 11,000.

Furthermore, the Kennedy escalation was qualitative even more than quantitative. Eisenhower's 700 were stationed in comparative safety, at central headquarters and supply depots where they trained the Vietnamese in organization, planning, supply, and maintenance. Kennedy sent U.S. advisers to the battalion level. A battalion is a tactical unit; its command post is near the front lines; its staff goes regularly to company command posts. Advisers at that level were sure to incur casualties; once U.S. personnel had been killed or wounded withdrawal became far more difficult and more embarrassing.

2. Your suggestion that President Kennedy really intended to withdraw from Vietnam after the 1964 election seems more an attack than a defense. You accuse him of political cowardice. You suggest he was willing to sacrifice the lives of American soldiers fighting for a cause in which he did not believe in order to protect his personal political career. JFK had his faults; I do not think cowardice was one of them.

Garold W. Thumm
Lewiston, ME

Charles Peters replies: *I once felt the last point was so persuasive that Russell Baker and I made it in our March 1971 issue ["The Prince and His Courtiers"]. But I was impressed by a reply by Kenneth O'Donnell, one of JFK's aides, that pointed out that at the time of Kennedy's death only a handful of American servicemen—I believe the figure was 19—had been killed in Vietnam.*

The Washington Monthly

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Subscription rates: U.S. and possessions: one year, $38; two years, $72; three years, $98. For Canadian and foreign subscriptions, add $7 for surface delivery; air mail delivery add $32. Back issues, $5.00. Send correspondence concerning subscriptions, undelivered copies, and changes of address to Box 587, Mount Morris IL, 61054. For change of address, please provide six weeks' notice and include old address label. *The Washington Monthly* is indexed in the Book Review Index, Political Science Abstracts, Public Affairs Information Service, the Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature, the Social Science Index, and Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory and may be obtained on microfilm from University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Reprints of articles are available to individuals or schools at $2.00 each (prepaid). For reprint rights for all or part of an article call Carey Jones at (202) 462-0128. Published monthly except combined July/August and January/February issues by The Washington Monthly Company, 1611 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20009 (202) 462-0128. Printed in U.S.A.

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ISSN 0043-0633. Postmaster: Send change of address to *The Washington Monthly*, Box 587, Mount Morris IL, 61054. Second class postage paid at Mechanicsburg, PA. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

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Tilting at Windmills

Bloomingdale's recently ran a full page ad of a woman dressed in what looked like an old Navy pea jacket, shirt, sweatpants, and running shoes. The copy read, "shirttails and sneakers, collars and cuffs, elegance and nonchalance, black and white, fall 1993 is a purely personal unconventional mix that proves individual style is more than just the sum of its parts." The sum of the costs is certainly more—when you take a look at the small print, it adds up to $4,700. . . .

Tentativeness appears to be the trait that is most characteristic of the officials below Clinton in the new administration. If the president himself has seemed uncertain from time to time—and to me his apparent insecurity has been the most surprising thing about his presidency—Clinton is the embodiment of resolute purpose compared to his subordinates. My guess is that this is because they correctly perceive that he very much wants to run his own show and are therefore unclear what room is left for them to pursue what they think is right without express approval from the president. (This is what insiders call "message discipline.") Janet Reno seems to be the only exception to this rule, enough of one that some in the White House are said to regard her as a loose cannon. For others, this fear can produce good results—having Les Aspin clear everything with the White House probably makes sense—but it can also stifle initiative on causes worth pushing, as when Bruce Babbitt was rebuked early on for supporting raising mining and grazing fees. The president needs to find a way to foster more boldness and creativity—traits not immediately associated with a cabinet led by Warren Christopher—among his subordinates. Clinton has my sympathy because this is not easy to do while maintaining a firm grip on the reins of government and avoiding the appearance of an administration in disarray, but he's got to do it if the administration is to be successful. One artful way to deal with this difficult matter is to have the subordinate make clear when he floats a trial balloon that he is *not* speaking for the president.

Clinton is so full of good will and genuine concern and is so obviously one of the most intelligent and well-informed men ever to occupy the White House—in other words, his potential is so great—that one feels a special obligation to try to alert him and his friends to the characteristics that keep him from realizing that potential.

Another of those traits, and one that is equally dangerous to Clinton's presidency, is his distaste for hearing the bad news. *Newsweek*'s Steven Waldman gives this example from the campaign: When Clinton was being applauded for proposing a program that would reward national service with a free college education, aides quickly learned not to confront him with the fact that such a program would be impossibly expensive. . . .

The pathetic frustration of last month's New Yorker who was trying to get a pothole filled is echoed by this letter written to the *Los Angeles Times* about one woman's experience with the California justice system:

"On July 4, my sister and I were mugged in front of her apartment. My sister's newborn daughter was thrown to the cement, my sister was knocked down and I was hit. I was able to get the license plate number of the car, called 911, and paramedics arrived to take the baby to the hospital to be examined.

"The car was spotted by police helicopter and officers on the ground apprehended the suspects. In the hospital parking lot, my sister and I made a field identification of the man who assaulted us.

"Several weeks later we were subpoenaed to appear at the preliminary hearing. I drove up from my home in San Diego. We were unable to testify, however, because no one at the court could find the suspects—who had been in jail since July 4.

"A new preliminary hearing was set. I once again came up from San Diego. My sister and I waited four hours to testify. My sister was finally called in, with the suspects present. At this time, one of the defense lawyers requested that her testimony, and subsequently mine, be disallowed, as we had not participated in the lineup and now that my sister had seen them in court, it was prejudicial. The assistant district attorney never spoke up on our behalf. The charges involving us were dropped. We were told that new charges would probably not be filed." . . .

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It has long been my conviction that the purpose of the American legal system is to serve not the cause of justice but the convenience of lawyers, judges, and court employees. Ask anyone who has wasted hours and days in the hurry-up-and-wait of jury service. And consider Clayton J. Powell, Jr., the Washington attorney who recently told the court that he had to desert his client in mid-trial because he had a non-refundable plane ticket to Jamaica. He could even have cited a precedent. In 1971, a New York judge had dismissed a jury in mid-deliberation because the day had arrived for his trip to Europe to begin. As a result, a robber went free.

Bureaucracies are similar in that they too tend to be run less in the public interest than for the comfort and convenience of the bureaucrats. If you suspect I'm carrying this point too far, ponder the case of Jerry M. Brown, medical coordinator for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, who left for vacation the day after the 1989 California earthquake that collapsed the Oakland freeway and started the San Francisco fires that you will remember from television. Brown explained that he, too, had non-refundable airline tickets. . . .

When you go to the supermarket, why do you have to walk to the back of the store to find the items you need most? The answer—for which I'm indebted to Vince Staten's new book, *Can You Trust a Tomato in January?*—is that a 1964 Department of Agriculture study found that it is not the time shoppers spend but how far they walk that determines how much they buy in the store. So now you know why the bread and milk and the eggs are always in the back. . . .

For those of you who share my sense that life is a close call in which disaster is just a step away, I offer further evidence that we are dead right.

In 1962, at the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis, when each side was poised to go to war at the slightest hint that the other was contemplating a preemptive strike, some genuises on our side launched test firings of two intercontinental missiles. Why did they go ahead with the tests? Because the tests had been scheduled. One missile, according to Scott Sagan's new book *The Limits of Safety*, was actually fired from Florida over Cuba toward the south Atlantic. If Soviet radar had been more efficient and had detected those launches, we would all be cinders today. . . .

Back to a point that I was making about Bill Clinton: Often, government officials don't want to hear the bad news. Another example of this problem is supplied by the *Challenger* disaster. When Thiokol engineers urged NASA to postpone the ill-fated flight, NASA's George Hardy said he was appalled and asked them to reconsider. Hardy and other top NASA officials didn't want to hear the bad news because they were determined to launch the next day so that President Reagan could point to this accomplishment in his State of the Union Message. They had even written a suggested insert for the speech that was scheduled for the evening of the same day the launch was to occur. *The Washington Monthly*'s theory on this case—which we published in November 1986—is substantiated by a new book by Christa McAuliffe's mother, Grace Corrigan, which says that even though the assembled families wondered how a liftoff could be scheduled on such a freezing day—"we could see icicles hanging from the shuttle"—Christa had told her mother that the lift off had already been decided the night before. "The word was out that today was the day—definitely." So the poor souls went off to their deaths all because a bunch of officials in Washington didn't want to hear the bad news that the O-rings in the *Challenger*'s booster rocket might contract catastrophically in cold weather. . . .

All this reminds me that all the efforts to reinvent government will fail unless we find a way to make sure that the bad news will travel up. One way to do this is to make sure the press systematically takes a good hard look at government agencies so that the officials of those agencies will know that it is probably futile to try to contain the bad news since some pesky journalist is likely to come along and report it to the world.

Of course the press won't do this job until editors decide it is a task they should perform and until editors hire reporters who have worked in government and know how it functions. In this regard it is absolutely incredible that *The Washington Post* refuses to let its reporters take leave for a year to participate in the White House Fellows program, which is one of the best ways an outsider can get a quick immersion in how Washington really works. . . .

One illustration of how this lack of experience in government has handicapped *Post* reporters is supplied by Ann Devroy, one of the paper's White House correspondents, who has repeatedly suggested that the administration has cheated on its pledge to reduce the White House staff by exempting the OMB from the cut even though, as she righteously points out, the OMB is part of the

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Executive Office of the President. But what any thoughtful student of government knows that *The Washington Post* doesn't is that the OMB examiner staff should be increased, not decreased. [See David Segal's article in this issue, page 18.]

Another example of the media's failure to understand government has been the reporting of the Hatch Act liberalization that was enacted this fall. Every story I read, not only in the *Post* but in other papers as well, framed the issue as being between those who favored political participation by civil servants and those who feared such participation would result in a politicization of the service. Not a single story discussed the issue of accountability or explored the possibly more desirable alternative of letting civil servants choose to participate fully in politics if they are willing to surrender their jobs when their party loses. Nor did a single story ask why we should give civil servants more political rights without asking more accountability from them in return. Finally, not one of the stories examined the case for a tenured civil service as opposed to the case for an accountable, meaning removable, bureaucracy. These questions are, to be sure, not simple. But there is terrible ignorance in not even being aware of them.

A simpler example of what the press doesn't know comes from the reporting of the locality pay raise agreed to this fall by the president and Congress. This raise is supposed to protect civil servants who work in places like New York City where the cost of living is especially high. But what no one reports is that there are no corresponding pay cuts for places like Alabama, where the cost of living is low. And no reporter points out that the figure on which the differentials are based leaves out the value of the generous package of benefits civil servants receive. And have any reporters told you that in addition to locality raises, civil servants can get "step" and grade increases as well as comparability increases that are based on a phony comparison between real private jobs and inflated federal job descriptions? There are also raises for special skills. It is even possible to get several of these increases in one year. In 1963, for example, I got three raises from the Peace Corps. . . .

It's funny that the media increasingly seems to understand the need for reporters who cover the law, medicine, and business to have some expertise. But in government the assumption is that anyone can do it. . . .

If Al Gore and Bill Clinton really do get rid of 200,000 midlevel managers, the salary savings will be substantial and the savings on rent are not to be sneezed at. Managerial employees who range from GS-12 to GS-18 in rank have traditionally been entitled to between 150 and 400 square feet of office space. If the average is around 250 square feet, then the government will no longer have to pay for 500 million square feet of office space. Assuming an average D.C. rental of $20 per square foot, that comes out to a savings of $10 billion. . . .

The District of Columbia employees pension board is in terrible trouble. It has $4.9 billion less than is needed to pay the pensions it owes. Are people drawn to the board to meet this enormous challenge? No. According to *The Washington Post*, "A seat on the board is coveted

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because the perks include trips to educational conferences at exotic locations in the United States and abroad." The costs of some of these trips, by the way, have been paid by investment firms that want to be hired by the board. . . .

I'm afraid I have to add my favorite paper, *The Charleston (W. Va.) Gazette,* to the list of those who have misrepresented health reform. A recent headline read, "Clinton Health Plan Will Cost People More." Did the story say that? No, it said that the plan would cost *some* people more.

But I'm happy to report that *The New York Times*, which we've often cited as a sinner on this issue, recently atoned at least partially by publishing an excellent op-ed piece by Melvin Konner making the case for the Canadian system and pointing out that under the current American system, "insurance companies, like Las Vegas casino owners, skim many billions off the top of our health care dollars, offering in return only inefficient administration." This is a fact that the press has miserably failed to make clear to the American people. The American system, with its many insurance company bureaucracies, is less efficient than the Canadian. The Canadian plan costs less to administer, and again contrary to the impression left by most of the media, it offers you the right to choose your own doctor and has the enthusiastic approval, according to poll after poll, of roughly 90 percent of the Canadian people . . . .

The reason the state has to act to control health costs, as the Canadians do, is that because of the life-or-death power of medical providers, ordinary market forces won't hold prices down. People who can pay will pay anything that is asked to stay alive. There is a simple example that I have used to show what has to be done. Society long ago realized that it could not let policemen, firemen, soldiers, and sailors set their own salaries because they could use their own life-or-death power to hold us up. As a result, we realized that we had to set their salaries ourselves and not let them charge us whatever they wanted. The same principle applies to health care providers. . . .

The two most unappreciated (by the media) facts about the case of the temporary secretary of the Army who was caught shoplifting at the PX are (1) the blouse and skirt he snatched were valued at only $30, which to the average woman demonstrates what a deal armed services personnel have in their PXs, and (2) the temporary secretary was on duty only because Bill Clinton didn't get around to appointing his secretary of the Army until mid-September. . . .

If you think that the industry proposals to forbid campaign contributions will solve the problem of corruption in the municipal bond industry, consider the many ways firms have found to take care of local officials who could award them bond business. For example, Dr. William Collins, whose wife Martha Layne Collins was governor of Kentucky, has been charged with getting $1.7 million from bond underwriters in the form of such exotic transfers as investments in his horsebreeding business and a $35,000 piano handcrafted in Germany that Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette, a New York firm involved

ASSASSINATION IN KHARTOUM

DAVID A. KORN

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in Kentucky's bond business, thought would make a dandy present for the doctor's wife. . . .

Last month I wrote about how my wife and I couldn't face buying a new car because we can't endure haggling with auto salesmen. Now comes an explanation of one reason why we must all undergo such torment. According to James Bennet, who covers Detroit for *The New York Times*, it is because auto company executives never buy cars themselves. The typical executive has "never had the experience of haggling over price and trade-ins, or fussing with matters like auto insurance or registration nor has he had to endure the charms of service managers or the fear that strikes in the heart of almost everybody who confronts the cashier who says the repairs cost far more than expected." The car companies regularly supply their executives with a new car gassed up and ready to go in the executive's parking space. GM executives get one every 3,000 miles, which is of course usually too early for problems to crop up. The new president of Ford says, "I have never bought a car in America and I don't see why I should do that. I know a lot of dealers and I don't see why I have to buy a car to get in touch with the dealer-customer relationship." That takes the prize for resolute stupidity. He knows a lot of dealers for God's sake! The point is, he doesn't know the customers. . . .

Here in Washington, children are being shot in the crossfire of drug wars. Youngsters barely into adolescence are lured by the big money into serving as dope runners and hit men. The only way to end this horror is to legalize drugs. This won't end addiction but it will eliminate the enormous illegal profits that attract criminals and lead to violence. While legalization may actually result in some increased addiction, the evidence from the period after Prohibition suggests that this increase won't be overwhelming. And even that increase, mostly due to popular culture's glamorization of alcohol in the thirties, could be avoided if we refuse to repeat for drugs the absurd kinds of movies in which tipsy William Powells were depicted as charming and attractive, and Jack Norton portrayed a falling down drunk as endearingly amusing. And of course the mistakes made with alcohol and tobacco must be avoided by prohibiting advertising that makes the consumption of any harmful substance seem attractive. . . .

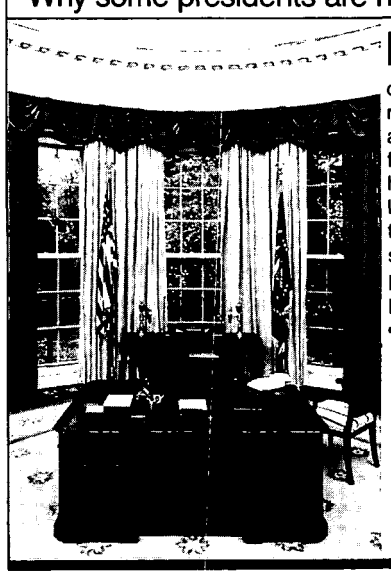
Having read all the earlier items in this column that have been critical of bureaucracy, new readers may wonder how on earth I can advocate having health care run by the government. One reason is that as long as congressmen and civil servants have the same program as the rest of us, I am confident that they will make the system work. But if we let them get away with having a different program, then we may be doomed.

While serving in the Army in 1945, I was injured and sent to Ashford General Hospital in West Virginia. One day as I was talking to a friend in the lobby, I accidentally backed into another soldier—he was General Dwight D. Eisenhower. I was a private, but we were in the same hospital being treated by the same staff. That's the way it should be for all of us now. . . .

—*Charles Peters*

Cornered In The Oval Office

Why some presidents are hard-pressed to avoid failure.



Presidents succeed presidents whose programs they aim to affirm or reject, opposition to which may be negligible or monumental. In this innovative and provocative analysis, Skowronek finds presidents from John Adams to George Bush who have lived in the same "political time," their leadership constrained by the context of their succession and the politics they shaped to deal with it. Changing those politics, breaking the mold of political time, promises greater success for future leaders.

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Pressed for Time

One week in the Clinton White House and you get the sense that the press corps and the press office deserve each other

BY DAVID SHAW

FRIDAY, JULY 16: I arrive in Washington mid-morning and call around to arrange interviews for a series of stories for the *Los Angeles Times* examining media coverage of the Clinton administration. My first calls are to George Stephanopoulos and David Gergen, both senior advisors to Clinton, and to Mark Gearan, the White House director of communications.

None of the three is in his office.

I leave messages and make a few other calls. No one is available. This is the first full day back in Washington for the president and most of the people I want to talk to; his top aides and the reporters who regularly cover him have all just returned from the G-7 economic summit in Tokyo and from a visit to the flood-ravaged Midwest. They're all understandably busy.

I arrange for temporary press credentials and go to the White House press room to see who's around. I see a few familiar faces and introduce myself to several reporters I want to interview next week. I also attend Press Secretary Dee Dee Myers' daily briefing for the White House press corps. The briefing is scheduled for 11:30 a.m.

It starts at 1:13 p.m.

That's typical, I'm told. Nothing at the White House ever starts on time. Clinton is habitually late. So is Gergen. Together, they are setting *Guinness Book of World Records* standards for tardiness. "Clinton has no concept of the traditional middle-class virtue of not keeping other people waiting," Ann Devroy, a White House correspondent for *The Washington Post*, tells me. "He is extraordinarily self-absorbed."

I later discover that this helps explain why the press corps was so antagonistic to the Clinton administration in its early months: Clinton's "self-absorption" and the reporters' self-importance collided to produce unprecedentedly hostile feelings and unprecedentedly hostile coverage for a new president so early in his term. There are other factors in the equation as well, of course: Clinton's own missteps and miscalculations, the post-Vietnam, post-Watergate cynicism of the press, the tabloidization of the mainstream media. Yet another collision was

David Shaw is the Pulitzer Prize-winning media critic of the Los Angeles Times.

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causing a lot of the friction, this one between Bill Clinton's dilatory decision-making and the media's demand for instant, incremental news. He thinks aloud and his aides pass on the (seemingly) definitive word on this program or that appointment; reporters rush into print and on the air with the scoop—then the president changes his mind and pisses everyone off.

Pissed off is what many White House reporters were before Gergen rode to the rescue in late spring with enough political savvy and ego balm to begin turning things around.

Myers survives today's briefing skirmishes and when she's done, I introduce myself and we arrange an interview for next Wednesday. Gergen and Stephanopoulos are supposed to give a joint "background briefing" later that afternoon on the president's policy on gays in the military. I decide to attend and buttonhole them afterward.

The briefing is scheduled to start "between 3 and 4" o'clock.

It starts at 5:07.

"Gergen time," the reporter sitting next to me mutters.

When the briefing is over, I grab Gergen and tell him I'd like to interview him next week for my story. "Sure," he says. "Call Diana [Gergen's assistant]. She'll set it up." I go back to my hotel and call Diana. She's on the other line. I leave a message. She doesn't call back. Neither does Stephanopoulos or Gearan. I realize that the president's staff is busy running the country and that my story is not—and should not—be a priority, but a little common courtesy wouldn't hurt.

MONDAY, JULY 19: Myers' daily briefing, originally scheduled for 11:30 a.m., is rescheduled for 12:30 p.m. (It actually starts at 12:45.) I use the morning to conduct a couple of interviews and make a few phone calls.

One of my first calls is to Diana. She's on the other line. I call Gearan. He's not in. I try Stephanopoulos' assistant, Heather Beckel. She says she doesn't have the president's schedule yet so she can't figure out Stephanopoulos' schedule well enough to give me an appointment. That's reasonable. But that's what she said the last time I wanted to interview Stephanopoulos and then she didn't call me back. I didn't get the interview until I found a way around Heather just five hours before I was scheduled to leave Washington. But Stephanopoulos had agreed to talk again when I came back, so I'm willing to wait a couple of days.

Meanwhile, I go to the daily White House press briefing. At this one, reporters devote most of their energy to trying, unsuccessfully, to induce Myers to say more than she's prepared to say about the president's plans to meet with Attorney General Janet Reno to discuss the fate of William Sessions, the FBI director. It's clear that Clinton is going to fire Sessions. But just as clearly, Myers doesn't want to say so yet. Nevertheless, reporters keep questioning her about the issue. Seven different times she has to say essentially the same thing: "We'll have more to say about the situation after the president has spoken with Janet Reno."

I ask several reporters why they're so determined to wring a definitive statement out of Myers at 1 o'clock when they'll have official word from the president himself around 4 o'clock. For radio and TV reporters, an hour and a half can make a difference, says Helen Thomas, White House correpondent for United Press International. A difference to whom? Do viewers, listeners, and readers really care if they hear about the dismissal of the FBI director three hours later?

"I spend enormous amounts of mental energy to break a story that, three days later, no one cares who got it first," concedes John King, Thomas' counterpart at the Associated Press. "Could I do better journalism if I didn't, every now and then, have to go with reckless abandon to get it five minutes before everybody else? Yeah, I could. . . It's probably childish, but I get a kick when CNN has to interrupt programming to say, 'According to the Associated Press, Clinton is going to. . .'"

When I ask Myers why she thinks reporters badger her so much, she says, "Some people just like to give you a hard time, and it's not necessarily connected to a news cycle. It's driven by the absolute faith that we will not tell them the truth."

TUESDAY, JULY 20: Between interviews with various reporters and White House sources, I twice call Diana in Gergen's office. She's in a meeting the first time, on another line the second time. I call Gearan. He's not in.

I go to the White House to talk to members of the press corps. My credentials, which were supposed to be available daily at the West entrance, aren't there.

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Late in the afternoon, I finally get through to Diana in Gergen's office. I explain that I'd like to see him any time that's convenient for him, up until 3 o'clock Friday afternoon. "I have a plane at 4:45 Friday," I say.

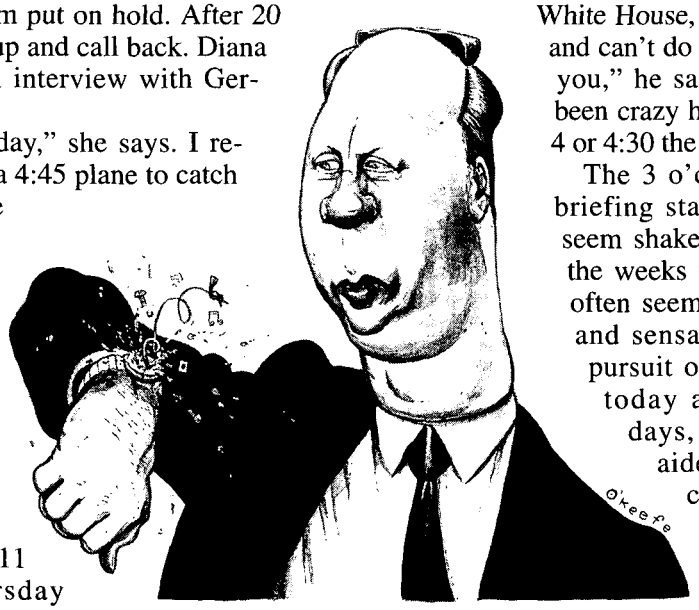
She says she'll get right back to me.

She doesn't.

I call back. I'm put on hold. After 20 minutes, I hang up and call back. Diana says I've got an interview with Gergen.

"It's 6:15 Friday," she says. I remind her I have a 4:45 plane to catch on Friday. She says she'll call me back.

Meanwhile, Gearan and I miss each other on the phone. Then Heather calls and says Stephanopoulos can see me at 11 o'clock Thursday morning. Moments later, Diana says Gergen can see me at 3:30 Thursday afternoon.



WEDNESDAY, JULY 21: Vincent Foster, the deputy White House counsel, killed himself last night. The White House is in disarray. Myers' 11:30 briefing is canceled. Instead, Gearan and Thomas F. (Mack) McLarty, the president's chief of staff, will give a briefing on Foster's suicide at 1 o'clock.

I call the White House press office to make sure my credentials will be waiting for me. "Don't worry. We'll take care of it," one of the press aides says.

When I get to the West entrance, the Secret Service agents in charge say they have no record of any request for credentials for me. I phone in but no one there remembers my call from 15 minutes ago. Jeremie Gaines, the person in charge, is not there.

After another 15 minute wait, my credentials come through. When I tell Gaines what happened, he apologizes and says he'll do his best not to let it happen again. "But it happens 30 times a day," he says. "It's the Secret Service's fault. We send them the information."

I walk into the the White House press room for the 1 o'clock Gearan/McLarty briefing. It's been postponed to 3 o'clock. At 2 o'clock, I go to Myers' office for our previously scheduled appointment. Her assistant, Dave Leavy, the most helpful press aide I've met so far in the Clinton White House, tells me she's swamped and can't do it. "I should have called you," he says. "I'm sorry, but it's been crazy here." We reschedule for 4 or 4:30 the next day.

The 3 o'clock McLarty/Gearan briefing starts at 3:38. Both men seem shaken. And tight-lipped. In the weeks to come, the press will often seem ghoulishly insensitive and sensation-mongering in its pursuit of the Foster story. But today and for the next few days, it's the White House aides who makes me uncomfortable. They want to say as little as possible, even if it's misleading. When reporters ask if Foster had seemed depressed or upset, Gearan says repeatedly, "He never said anything that was out of the ordinary to his colleagues."

As more comes out in ensuing days about how depressed Foster clearly was—and as the media frantically chase the story in quest of some presumed (and presumed dastardly) White House secret—I will become increasingly convinced that Clinton's White House press aides and the White House press corps truly deserve each other. (After all, Curtis Wilkie of the *Boston Globe* once rightly described the White House press room as "the only day-care center in America Ronald Reagan hasn't abolished.")

THURSDAY, JULY 22: I call the press office to make sure my credentials will be waiting for me this time.

"We'll take care of it."

When I arrive, no credentials.

I tell the agent at the gate that the press office says it's the Secret Service's fault. He bristles.

"If they fax it to us, it's here; if they don't, it isn't."

David O'Keefe

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When I'm finally cleared, I interview Stephanopoulos. The daily 11:30 briefing is again delayed—rescheduled to 1 p.m. (It actually starts at 1:32 p.m.).

After lunch, I see Gergen. Like Stephanopoulos, he's a good, lively interview. Almost as important, he's only 6 minutes late. No one believes me when I later tell them this. A mere 6 minutes late, I am assured, is an all-time punctuality record for him.

I head for Myers' office. She's busy. "Come back in 45 minutes." I go off to make a few calls. Meanwhile, Paul Begala, one of the president's top political advisors, wants to switch our Friday interview from 11 a.m. to lunch. Then Begala's office calls again, returning an earlier call of mine; Begala's partner, James Carville—the manager of Clinton's victorious campaign—wants to see me. We arrange to meet at 9 o'clock the next morning. I go back to Myers' office.

"Give us another 20 minutes."

It's 5 o'clock.

At 5:50, I'm ushered into Myers' office.

When I leave, Gearan's assistant grabs me. Gearan and I have missed each other on the phone several times and now he says Gearan is available. Bingo!

FRIDAY, JULY 23: I go to Carville's office at 9 a.m., as requested. "Typical James," his assistant tells me. "He won't be here 'til 10:30."

I leave Carville's office and call the White House to ask that my press credentials be waiting. "We'll take care of it," says a young press aide. When I get there, the Secret Service agent—who recognizes me by now—hits the keys on his computer and smiles.

"You're cleared—for the press conference in the OEB [Old Executive Office Building] at 11:15."

"I don't want to go to the OEB," I say. "I didn't ask to go to the OEB. I've never asked to go to the OEB. I just want to go to the press room, like I have every other day this week."

I call the press office and ask why they have screwed up my credentials every single goddamn day. No one knows what I'm talking about. But they say they'll take care of it. I tell the Secret Service agent to hold my credential when he gets it.

I hail a cab, figuring that by the time I'm through with Carville and Begala, the press office should have my credential snafu straightened out. When I return, it's four hours later. The Secret Service agent checks his computer and says, "I'm sorry, you're still only cleared for the OEB." □

The Washington Monthly

JOURNALISM AWARD

FOR AUGUST 1993 IS PRESENTED TO

GARY WEBB

San Jose Mercury News

Cash-strapped California law enforcement agencies took Proposition 13 hard back in the seventies—and suspected (not convicted, mind you, but *suspected*) minor drug offenders have been paying for it. In a three month investigation of the state's asset forfeiture law, Webb found that county sheriffs and local police departments have collected about $1 billion in just the last five years from people like Greg Augustus, who had $230 in cash confiscated when he was stopped and had prescription pain relievers on him—for his arthritis. Because there's no oversight, no statewide reporting requirements, and therefore no accountability, poorer people like Augustus are at a disadvantage when it comes to getting their property back if the charges are dropped or they're acquitted. And the burden of proof for seizing anything from a house to a car to a boat to a compact disc player has been steadily cut down: It's now not "beyond a reasonable doubt" but "more likely than not." This is a case of a well-intentioned law—confiscating assets of major drug dealers—turning bad on the ground, because small-timers are easier to hit.

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to the best newspaper, magazine, television, or radio story (or series of stories) on our political system. Nominations for any newspaper, magazine, or radio or television station in the country are welcome. The subject can be government in its federal, state, or municipal manifestation. Please send nominations to Monthly Journalism Award, 1611 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20009. Two copies of the article or broadcast text should accompany the nomination.

Nominations for stories published or aired in November will close December 15. The winner will be announced in the March issue.

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Hoarding the Health

Congress, the White House, and the bureaucracy want to stay out of the plan that will cover 83 percent of the country. You can bet that if they succeed, it'll be hazardous to your health

BY ALAN GREENBLATT

On September 22, President Clinton told a rapt nationwide audience that when it comes to health care, "We're all in this together." Two days later Congress had a chance to prove it. Paul Wellstone, the progressive senator from Minnesota, proposed an amendment to an unrelated spending bill "to assure that members of Congress participate on an equal basis with their constituents in [any] health care system" put into law in the coming months. As Iowa Senator Charles Grassley admitted, "It certainly would be the height of hypocrisy to develop such a system for our fellow citizens, but exempt ourselves from it."

And yet that's what they've decided to do. In defeating Wellstone's amendment, the Senate showed exactly what's wrong with Washington: Those on the inside are more interested in protecting themselves than in helping those on the outside. Members of Congress, instead of putting themselves in the same plan that covers the little guy or making what they currently get workable for the rest of the country, want to be able to buy a better deal in the new era. The result will be a government that won't fix the system's problems because the people running Washington won't be in the same boat as the rest of us.

Clinton's plan, as it currently stands, would create a "core-benefit package," a benchmark plan that would cover 83 percent of Americans. (The other 17 percent are expected to opt out and buy more coverage.) In his address, Clinton stressed "choice" as one of his six "basic values and principles" for reform. But under managed competition, those 83 percent are bound to lose a certain amount of choice, particularly on doctors they can see. There's a loophole for those with a loaded checkbook, though: People who want to choose their own doctor can pay for the privilege—and affluent Washington wants that privilege. One of the capital's best kept secrets is the Federal Employee Health Benefit Program, which lawmakers and the federal bureaucracy want to keep. "We have long been in support of national health care," says Diane Witiak of the American Federation of Government Employees, "but we would not support a program that asked for a diminution of benefits for our members." In other words, the people who are supposed to be watching out for the public welfare are perfectly willing to let the public twist in the waiting room while the insiders are protected.

We're not just talking about being covered for luxurious extras like cosmetic surgery and in vitro fertilization. A recent University of Rochester study found that the uninsured, who have access to one-third less care, suffer serious problems such as more premature births and a 25 percent higher death rate as a result. The president is promising comprehensive coverage to all Americans but his program still allows a wide disparity in coverage and access. Congressman Pete Stark of California says, "tens of millions of Americans will be stuck in the cheapest health plan in their geographic area."

Alan Greenblatt is a Washington writer.

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Stark is sponsoring legislation which would require every member of Congress to be similarly stuck in his home district's cheapest plan to ensure that it offers high quality care.

Members of Congress, remember, aren't starving: With an annual $133,600 salary, they make more than 94 percent of their constituents and will be able to buy their way up. With Congress and the bureaucracy bailing out, the personal contact with the system that will be absolutely necessary to understanding what's wrong and how to fix it will be missing. "If we say it is good enough for us," Wellstone reasoned, "surely we will be working very hard to make sure it is good for our constituents."

Though she ran as a "mom in tennis shoes" in 1992, freshman Washington Senator Patty Murray doesn't agree. As recently as December 1992, Murray stressed the importance of congressmen understanding the lives and concerns of those they represent: "People who pass policies about our lives need to understand exactly who we are." But that was then. During the floor debate on Wellstone's amendment, Murray insisted that senators should not "put ourselves aside from the rest of the country [and] bash ourselves" by not preserving the right to buy up and out of any package they impose on the country. "I happen to be the only mother with two children here to care for," Murray said "I want to be able to make the choice not as a senator of the United States, but as a mother who goes home and talks to my husband and my family and does what is right."

HYPOCRATIC OATHS

It only seems fair that Congress should have to live with the medical plan it enacts for the rest of the nation. But there's another side to this issue that concerns me just as much. It's the way Hill Republicans are blasting President Clinton for proposing a medical plan whose mechanics are very much like their own current coverage.

The morning after the president's health reform speech, I came to Capitol Hill expecting to find throngs of angry Republicans storming the House and Senate personnel offices, withdrawing from the congressional medical plan, and demonstrating in the streets.

After all, the Republicans had just battered the president's proposal with virtually every entry from their liberal-baiting phrasebook. "It's loaded with more spending and more bureaucracy," declared Senator Connie Mack of Florida in the GOP response to Clinton's address. "It will devastate jobs and our economy. It will lead us to a system of government-controlled health care."

What went almost totally unnoticed in all this is that the proposal the Republicans were lambasting on national television is very similar to the one they and their staffs now enjoy. ("And at taxpayer expense," as Republicans are wont to snarl when someone else's benefit is on the table.) But instead of ironing out potential problems—such as doctor choice, cost control, and small business burdens—in taking Washington's plan national, Republicans are enjoying great benefits while attacking Clinton for suggesting that others should enjoy these benefits, too. It's bad enough that Republicans *and* Democrats in Congress are trying to keep their own privileges; it's even worse that the opposition is using intellectually dishonest arguments to stymie reform. When voters say to their representatives, as they should at every opportunity, "Why not give all of us what you have?" Democrats may tap dance a little, but Republicans are doing a world class fox trot.

No, the plans aren't absolutely identical. Under the plan that covers lawmakers, White House officials, and the rest of the government, an umbrella agency ("dozens of new bureaucracies") called the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) selects a menu of insurers ("less freedom for us all") from which government employees can choose. There's even an employer mandate: Every Hill office, and every federal agency, must offer a version of the plan.

The differences don't amount to a whole lot in relation to the Republican criticism of the Clinton plan. For example, the federal plan, unlike the Clinton proposal, is voluntary—technically. But with the government paying 60 to 75 percent of the cost, few do that. About 85 percent of members and staff do sign up. (Among those that don't, the over-

Sloan Kitchen has worked on a congressional staff.

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Wellstone retorted, "We are going to set an average price plan for middle class people, but . . . we know it will not be good enough for our families; therefore, we want to make sure we are able to opt out of it." Murray's remarks put her in the same league as the Clintons deciding to send Chelsea to private school, or Dan Quayle saying he'd support his daughter's decision to have an abortion (but no one else's).

Don't think personal involvement makes any difference to how Congress thinks? Tom Harkin, whose brother is deaf, wrote the Americans with Disabilities Act (from which Congress promptly exempted itself). On health care, Harris Wofford, one of the Senate's leading advocates of a national health plan, has a good reason to make sure every American will be covered regardless of preexisting conditions. When he was appointed to the Senate in 1991 to replace the late John Heinz, Wofford signed up for the congressional health plan. Shortly thereafter, his wife became seriously ill; Wofford worried that if he wasn't reelected, his wife wouldn't be able to get any coverage at all due to her condition.

"Congress should be in the same boat as the rest of the American people," Wofford, who supported Wellstone's move, insists, "especially when it comes to health care." But congressmen have access to a well-staffed clinic on the first floor of the Capitol and an ambulance standing by while they're in session.

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whelming reason is that a spouse has a better plan. For all the commotion over congressional perks, one of Washington's dirty little secrets is that lobbyists, special interest apparatchiks, and reporters for major media often enjoy even bigger ones.)

A second difference concerns the so-called "alliances." Under the government employee program, the umbrella organization is pretty passive. It screens the competing plans for financial solvency, the way a state insurance commission would, but that's about it. Under the Clinton plan, the alliances would use their muscle in the marketplace to strike a better bargain for their participants—in other words, using the same principle to achieve a better result.

Not only do Republicans sign up for the plan in droves, but in the years they controlled the White House and the Senate they made little effort to change it. All parties agree, moreover, that this is one government program that works pretty well. Cost increases have been well below the national averages.

The conservative Heritage Foundation even praised the government employee plan in the latest issue of its magazine, *Policy Review*. "FEHBP offers us a glimpse of what a competitive market for health care might look like," the magazine raved. Many supporters of the Clinton plan would agree. So what's the big fight about—besides partisan issue-mongering?

This is not a brief for the Clinton plan. I'm not enamoured of it at all. But I'm equally concerned about the gap between the Republican critique of it and the plan that they themselves enjoy without protest.

There's an even greater gap between their polemics and the blue-chip care they get at Walter Reed Army Hospital. By Republican lights, if there's anything worse than the Clinton plan, it's a full-fledged government health service. Oh, the incompetence, moral flaccidity and waste that would flourish if government ran the medical system. But the government runs Walter Reed. Yet did anyone hear Presidents Reagan or Bush decrying the evils of socialism when they left there after well-publicized procedures? I recall praise for the first-rate care.

On the Hill, Republicans and Democrats alike scurry off to Walter Reed at every opportunity. A dentist I know used to practice there, and he speaks proudly of doing dental work for a prominent Republican senator who has been dissing the Clinton plan. The senator is a veteran who has earned the right to go to Walter Reed. But it's still funny how government seems to work just fine when Republicans are the beneficiaries.

The final irony is that the Republicans now find themselves in very much the same position as the government employee unions. They like the federal employee plan just fine. They just don't want to share the benefits with anybody else.

—*Sloan Kitchen*

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House members write a check for $234 a year to pay for check ups, exams, and medical advice; senators pay $520. But taxpayers underwrite these convenient services to the tune of $1.5 million. Wouldn't you like a deal like that at the office?

As a congresswoman, Barbara Boxer bounced 143 checks against the House bank. Nevertheless, in her race for the Senate from California last year, she successfully positioned herself as an "outsider" and pledged to "shake up" an institution she called out of touch. But in September she, like Murray, invoked the need for her family to "decide what is best for us" in dismissing Wellstone's call for Congress to adhere to the standard package.

"I think it is a very dangerous precedent, to single out one group of people in society and treat them differently in this health plan," said Boxer. But even as Boxer denounces special treatment, she's embracing it for herself and her colleagues. As Murray herself said, in the now distant 1992 campaign, "If you elect elites. . . you don't have a group of people who understand."

During a Senate hearing the week following the president's address, Wellstone asked Hillary Clinton what recourse people would have if their care proves deficient but they don't have the money to buy their way up. She admitted that "some plans might be more of a financial stretch than others. But until [the new system] is really up and going, we are not going to know which plans, whether it is high, medium or low-priced, will be most satisfactory."

Well, we can probably guess.

Since most of us will be covered under the lowest priced plan, Wellstone and Stark are right: The surest way to guarantee adequate universal coverage is for the people in charge to participate equally with the bulk of Americans. Congress has a long and ignominious history of exempting itself from the laws it passes to govern the rest of us. With Wellstone promising to reintroduce his original amendment and Stark's bill working its way through the House, this is a chance to make sure that doesn't happen with health care. □

Who's

When **Bill Clinton** was in Los Angeles during last month's Somalia crisis, he managed to find time for a late night meeting in his Beverly Hills Hilton suite with his brother **Roger**, who is playing "Mayor Bubba" in the forthcoming film, "Pumpkinhead II: Bloodwings.". . .

Since becoming president in January, **Clinton** has visited California more often than he has visited Arkansas. . . .

There is still no "enforcer" in the White House, which makes people wonder what happened to **Harold Ickes,** who was first scheduled to join the staff in January only to have his appointment derailed by unpleasant rumors from New York and again in June when he was being taken around Capitol Hill by administration escorts who explained that he was going to bring order to the White House. Perhaps **David Gergen**'s success at getting the press off **Clinton**'s back made Ickes seem less needed. Or maybe **Thomas McLarty** and **Roy Neel** decided they didn't want another chief of staff. In any event, something went so wrong that at least one report said Ickes and his pal **Susan Thomases** have been asked to surrender their White House passes, which were the only ones held by non-staffers. . . .

One of the hot thirtysomething couples in the age of **Clinton** are **Jody Greenstone**, **David Gergen**'s top assistant, and her husband, **Billy Webster,** who is Education Secretary **Dick Riley**'s chief of staff. . . .

Texas Senator **Kay Bailey Hutchison** is said to have little to fear from the charge that she used subordinates from her state treasurer's office for her campaign, which has been a traditional practice in the public life of the Lone Star state. But she may have a problem with the cover-up charges, including one for tampering with government records and another for tampering with physical evidence. . . .

Don Riegle, who announced his retirement from the Senate this fall, is said by friends never to have recovered his zest for public life since his dealings with the S&L scandal-tainted **Charles Keating** were revealed. . . .

Will 1994 be another year of the woman? As many as 33 women are considering running for the Senate and 105 could seek House seats, according to the Na-

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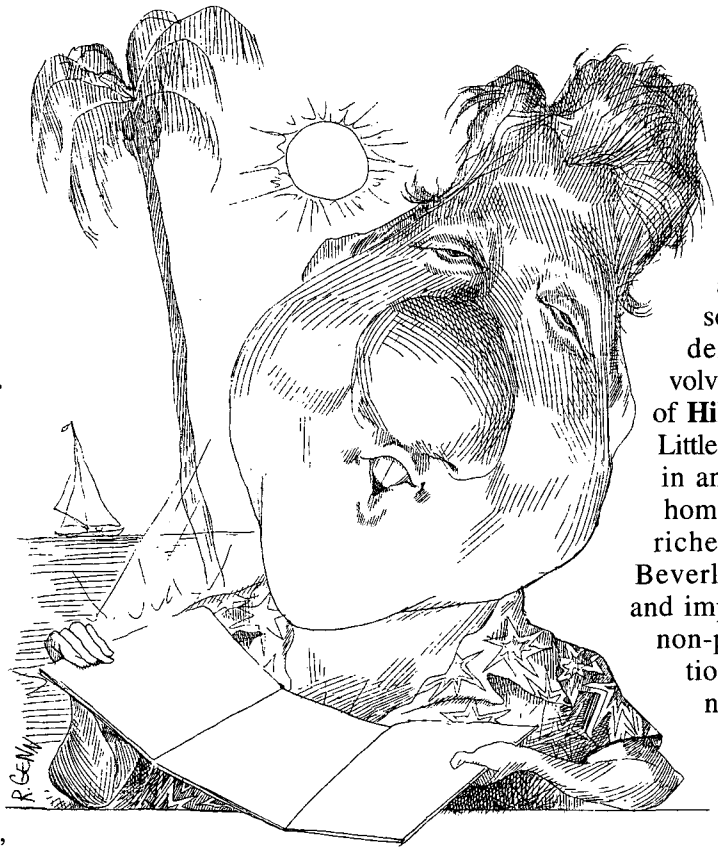
Who

tional Women's Political Caucus. The fly in the ointment is that too many are running in states such as Minnesota, where five women may run to replace **Dave Durenberger**, and Ohio and Michigan, where three may compete for the seats of **Howard Metzenbaum** and **Don Riegle**. . . .

Former National Institutes of Health director **Bernadine Healy** is one of the possible candidates in Ohio. . . .



The revolving door is still revolving. From the executive branch, 98 senior government officials took lobbying jobs upon leaving the government after last year's election, according to the Associated Press, and another 65 went to work for law firms that lobby on Capitol Hill. And from the legislative branch at least 22 became lobbyists, including such luminaries as Clinton's friend **Beryl Anthony**, prominent Republican **Willis Gradison,** and **Robert Leonard**, the former chief counsel to the House Ways and Means committee, all of whom are devoting themselves to protecting the interests of the health care industry. . . .

Everyone here is wondering why Secretary of Commerce **Ron Brown** had his staff mislead reporters into thinking he had had no contact with Vietnamese intermediaries who were allegedly planning to pay him $700,000 to lift trade sanctions against their country, when Brown's attorney, **Reid Weingarten**, later disclosed that there had been such meetings. Weingarten, by the way, knows his way around public corruption cases, having spent 10 years at the Justice Department prosecuting public officials who, like Brown, were accused of wrongdoing. Weingarten's shining moments at Justice include the conviction of former Congressman **John Jenrette**. . . .

According to the *Washington Times*, which is no friend of the administration, both **Webster Hubbell**, the deputy attorney general, and **William H. Kennedy II**, associate counsel to the president, were involved, as members of **Hillary Clinton**'s Little Rock law firm, in an Iowa nursing home deal that enriched their client, Beverly Enterprises, and impoverished the non-profit corporation to which the nursing home was sold. . . .

As many as 16 congressional committees may compete for jurisdiction over slices of the **Clinton** health plan. In the Senate, the principal contenders are **Daniel Patrick Moynihan**'s Finance committee, which includes **Hillary Clinton's** most ardent advocate, **Jay Rockefeller**, but has only an 11 to nine Democratic majority, and **Edward Kennedy**'s Labor and Human Resources, which has 10 Democrats and seven Republicans. . . .

Sycophancy is now on a rising arc at the White House, where aides voice dissenting opinions less and less in **Bill Clinton**'s presence, and when they do, they compete to find the most artful variations of "with all due respect, Mr. President." **Alexis Herman** and **Roger Altman** are said to be among the handful who do not hesitate to speak up to the boss. . . .

Betsey Wright, **Clinton**'s chief of staff in his gubernatorial days and later a major player in his presidential campaign, is now a lobbyist with **Anne Wexler**'s firm. She recently demonstrated her clout by helping persuade the adminstration to water down an executive order requiring the federal government to use recycled paper. . . .

—*Susan Threadgill*

Roman Genn

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What's Wrong with the Gore Report

A couple of hard truths that Gore & Co. need to face for their plan to overhaul the government to work

BY DAVID SEGAL

The Gore report on reinventing government lacks the aerated graphics of the latest *Mirabella* and the prose won't exactly give Bellow night sweats, but for a book on good government, reading it is hardly the drear you'd imagine. The chapters are divided helpfully, gray-boxed quotes from the likes of Emerson, Patton, and Werner von Braun pepper the text—and, most importantly, there is page after page of sound thinking about how to revamp the federal bureaucracy. The absurdities of life and work in the civil service are striking, after all, and the Gore report is a litany of right-sounding solutions, as commonsensical as they are overdue.

But by the time you get to about the middle of the document something begins to seem. . . off. Hard to tell what it is, really, until you get to page 68 and read this Al Gore quote:

> Our bedrock premise is that ineffective government is not the fault of the people in it. Our government is full of well-intentioned, hard-working, intelligent people—managers and staff. We intend to let our workers pursue excellence.

Ah ha. *That's* it. The first of several problems with this report is that it is entirely predicated on a set of exceptionally cheerful assumptions about not just the millions of bureaucrats in the federal government, but about humanity itself. People are good, the report implies with each paragraph. Bureaucrats are people. Because bureaucrats are good, agencies want to do what benefits the Republic, rather than what benefits agencies. If it makes sense to streamline, bureaucrats will streamline; if they need to train, they'll train. The talents and fundamental goodness of all bureaucrats have been obscured, in this logic, by a perverse welter of regulations and a set of incentives that encourage mediocrity rather than excellence.

This isn't wrong, exactly. Regulations *have* hamstrung bureaucrats and there is often no margin for creative thinking for either managers or front line workers. But that's just part of the problem. The rest of the problem is that for years the

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David Segal is an editor of The Washington Monthly.

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quality of worker in the bureaucracy has been in what one Office of Personnel Management executive described to political scientist James Q. Wilson as a "death spiral." It's been thirty years since any president even *tried* to inspire citizens to join the government: The last time was when John Kennedy beckoned to "Let public service be a proud and lively career," a call which doubled the number of college graduates applying to work in the government. And the quality problem got worse in the eighties. Reagan and (to a lesser extent) Bush believed that populating the bureaucracy with underachievers was one swell way to curtail government activism. So recruiting programs were cut back, superior candidates weren't sought out, and mediocrity was accepted as the norm. Terry Cutler, an assistant to Reagan's director at OPM, captured the prevailing philosophy in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed which argued that, "The government does not need top graduates, administrative offices staffed with MBAs from Wharton, or policy shops full of the best and brightest whatevers. Government's goals should not be employee excellence but employee sufficiency."

And through the seventies and eighties employee sufficiency is what we got. The Volcker Commission studied the quality of the civil service at the end of this period, and found that 90 percent of college honor students never seriously consider working in government. Pat Ingraham, a professor of government who worked on the study said, "I've talked with hundreds of line managers and administrators from practically every federal agency. And what I hear is the quality of new hires is just getting worse and worse."

The government thus stood on its head the first principle of any private sector venture—find the best people you can. Think about it. If you ran a business wouldn't you scour city and countryside for motivated, intelligent people? Wouldn't you even drive to a few campuses looking for promising upstarts? These days agencies rarely recruit newly-minted graduates and are especially scarce on the nation's top colleges. (Last year only the Department of Energy made a trip to the Ivies.) More work goes into filling scientific and technical posts, but with little hiring going on at a lot of agencies, many have stopped searching hard for high caliber people when entry level slots come open.

So how does the government find reinforcements? Most jobs are filled through what is essentially a buddy system: Bureaucrats give pals a heads up about what's available, help them navigate the bewildering application process, and tailor their candidacy to ideally match the job. Cronyism explains only part of this phenomenon. "Agencies aren't necessarily looking to hire friends, they're just looking for someone to hire fast," says Caroline Ban, an associate professor at the University of Albany and a former manager at OPM. Regulations can make hiring talent a four-month ordeal and every once in a while an unexpected hiring freeze postpones the chance to fill an opening. The rush leads to more and more buddies in government. The upshot? Without an ally on the inside, landing a job in the government these days is just a little likelier than winning Powerball.

The problem with a government of buddies is that it tends to attract people who are just looking for steady work with good benefits, rather than folks who are actually filled with an impulse to serve the commonweal. Instead of people dedicated to issues, causes, or the president's agenda, you get those who are looking for a good wage and the perks of federal employment. One of Clinton's White House insiders recently got a reminder of how prevalent this sensibility has become when he was driven to a speaking engagement by a civil servant. You'd think the driver would use the car ride to talk about policy or the direction of the government. Nary a word on the subject. The discussion was entirely about the great deal he was getting on health care and vacation time.

The buddy system is another reason that the quality of the civil service—especially in agencies like Agriculture, Commerce, Labor, and the General Services Administration—has been plummeting for years. Since the government doesn't measure the collective competence of its

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workforce (it'd be hard to do, anyway), most evidence of this is anecdotal. But there's plenty of it. You need look no further than the ATF's bumbling, pre-raid vaudeville in Waco, where a group of fortysomething agents tried to pose as college students as they cased the Koresh compound—thus tipping off the Branch Davidians of an imminent attack. Three years ago, a senior official at one agency told the *Monthly* that $300,000 in salary—10 percent of his office budget—went to incompetent and non-productive employees. And none of this is a secret. Back in 1988, a report by the Hudson Institute commissioned by the OPM warned of "a slowly emerging crisis of competence" in a slew of federal programs. Instead of attracting the best and the brightest, the report said, the government was getting the "best of the desperate."

The harvest of these arid years is now Clinton and Gore's. But the National Performance Review report ducks the problem and shies away from articulating a recruitment policy, perhaps because they are afraid to discuss new hires in a report that emphasizes the need to cut down the civil service. The reinventors want applicants to be able to apply directly to the agencies that interest them, rather than applying to OPM, and that's a superb idea. In a reinvented government, OPM would serve as a talent clearinghouse, making sure that the bright guy who wanted to work at Education but couldn't finds out about that job at Interior just vacated. But a vigorous recruitment campaign led by the president needs to be initiated at the same time. Unless the government finds the well-qualified, the under-qualified will keep finding it.

The report is clearer about what to do with another class of bureaucrat, the under-utilized, recommending that, in the next five years, the most delicate of mechanisms—attrition—reduce the bureaucracy by some 250,000 jobs. (It will take a bit longer than that since attrition rates aren't what they used to be. In 1983 the retirement rate was 2.5 percent and the quitting rate was 4.4 percent. In 1992 the retirement rate had dwindled to 1.5 percent and quitters were down to 3 percent.) To NPR's credit, the target of most of those cuts is middle management, an area of the bureaucracy which the *Monthly* has long argued needs a crash diet. (We've also warned that, though there's plenty of waste around the waist, nearly all managers do *something* necessary and making sure those tasks are covered is imperative.) But admitting that some workers are better than others—then making policy which accounts for the differences when it comes to downsizing—is equally crucial.

Gore might have wanted to avoid offending the powerful employees unions with this opening salvo, but you can't help but notice that soft-pedaling personnel quality also dovetails nicely with the business consultant rhetoric that suffuses the report. The NPRists often sound like a team of McKinsey associates trying to rationalize a division of Chrysler. While this yields encouraging prose about treating John Q. Public like a customer and delivering a better "product," the government/business analogy breaks down in ways that Gore seems not to want to face. If Chrysler had used the same hiring and firing techniques as the federal government over the past decade, Lee Iaccoca would be known as one of capitalism's great nitwits and the Le Baron would be outperformed by the Yugo.

Personnel Appeal

Keep in mind that what is being proposed here not only lacks blinding originality (a fact duly noted by the report's detractors), but some variations of it have been proposed before. Back in 1987, in a rare spasm of Reagan-era reform, the OPM drafted the endearingly-titled Civil Service Simplification Act. The law sought a lot of what is most enticing about NPR: expanded discretion for managers to hire and grant performance-based pay raises. (One key difference is that the bill was much bolder than NPR about allowing managers to fire.) The plan was to allow agencies to voluntarily and gradually adopt the same rules found in the private sector.

What happened when the bill got to Congress? "It was dead on arrival," says Constance Horner, then director of OPM. Two of the major players strongly resisted the reforms. For the federal labor unions, says Horner, "Strengthening the discretion of managers reduces the role of labor. If you have fewer rules, there are fewer rules that can be grieved." The unions already feel weak enough; the executive order which first recognized them prohibits them from bargaining over pay and consequently they cling

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to what powers they do have—like appealing disciplinary actions. The unions also have more than a little sway with Congress: All senators and a good many representatives have thousands of excitable federal employees in their home districts.

Given what happened in 1987, you might expect the employee unions to be gearing up to bludgeon any employee reform bill that emerges. The NPR drafters, however, traded edge for inclusion, toning down language in order to minimize union opposition. (Earlier drafts reportedly spoke tougher truths.) Union leaders were consulted along the way and promised a prominent hand in drafting the civil service's new rules in a series of union/management meetings in something called the National Partnership Council. Still, the report's recommendations, if all adopted, would proscribe labor's power. Why? Because the goal is to slim down managerial ranks so that there is one manager for every 15 workers instead of one for every seven—the creaking General Services Administration has one manager for every four front-liners—and to have a functioning workforce with that ratio, you have to expand the authority of managers. Yet unions are sounding surprisingly upbeat. "We think this is a good direction for the government to go in," says John Sturdivant, president of the American Federation of Government Employees. "It's a good report."

If Chrysler had used the same hiring and firing techniques as the federal government over the past decade, Lee Iaccoca would be known as one of capitalism's great nitwits and the Le Baron would be outperformed by the Yugo.

Why would unions back ideas they savaged in '87? Theories range from the unlikely (they were shmoozed), to the perfidious (Clinton has promised to allow them to bargain over pay some time in the future). Of course, it's easy for unions—and everybody else—to applaud freeing workers from stupid regulations. But that's like being for clean water. The question is whether the smiles will last when it comes time to reconfigure the personnel laws that are so much of the problem.

Consider disciplinary action. The NPR report rightly seeks to reduce the appeals process. Union leaders see that as the wrong focus. "The real issue," says Robert Tobias, head of the National Treasury Employees Union, "is that federal managers don't step up to the issue of poor performance in a clear way."

That's often true. Many people in the managerial ranks are there because their bosses promoted them to keep them around. These folks don't really manage and hate holding others accountable for performance. But the rules don't help; currently, it takes an iron gut to fire a bureaucrat. The process goes like this: 1) the manager must painstakingly document poor performance or misconduct, 2) the agency then must prove a negative effect on efficiency or on others, 3) employees must be informed of the proposed firing, 4) employees can appeal the matter to the Merit Systems Protection Board and get a ruling from a judge, 5) if they lose, employees can seek a grievance through a union arbitrator or appeal to the full board, 6) if they lose they can appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals. The years it takes to actually fire workers can easily outstrip the years it took them to demonstrate incompetence.

What is NPR's suggested reform for this quagmire? It reduces the required time for notice of termination from 30 to 15 days. In other words, the endless appeals process remains—it just gets started a little earlier.

Though NPR is skittish about how to get and keep the right workforce, it's bold on an all-too-neglected topic: holding bureaucrats account-

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able for performance. The problem is that most of what bureaucrats do doesn't directly affect any of us, so there's no way to tell whether a given job is being done right. And often it's hard to figure out who is to blame when things go wrong. Note that back when your local Congressman was known to have a voice in the selection of the local postmaster, the mail was delivered twice a day, sometimes more. Performance was obvious to everyone—people had daily reminders about the post office's efficiency delivered right to the door. Accountability was taken care of too—politicians knew that if they didn't get good people to run the system, they could be voted out of office.

The NPR report has some good ideas about increasing accountability by measuring outcomes and clarifying the objectives of federal programs. The report also spends a lot of energy damning the "thicket of rules and regulations" with their "layer upon layer of additional oversight." The government's approach to oversight takes some hard knocks—and deserves some. Too much of what's now fobbed off as quality control is actually ritualistic exercises in butt-covering: Managers making sure that forms have been filed and boxes checked off. When the point is simply to give the box-checker deniability should disaster strike, there will be more box-checking than necessary and most of it won't produce any good.

Audits aren't bad in themselves; the government just doesn't know how to perform them to any positive effect. What's needed is a distinction between evaluations that waste time and annoy, and those that lead to better work. The key questions, and the questions that most government audits never bother to ask are: Is the program's job worth doing and is it doing that job well? Instead of addressing those questions, most of what now passes for government oversight is niggling, and often it shines the light in the wrong place. Usually, when the government sets out to measure something, it measures the wrong thing.

For instance, when the IRS was asked to come up with a performance standard for their agents it decided to make the number of audits completed their benchmark. Sounds pretty good, doesn't it? But what happened is that agents started to frisk people eking out a middle-class living who could be audited in less than 27 minutes in order to fill their required quota. That let the millionaires off the hook because they tend to be more time consuming. But millionaires also tend to cough up real dough if they are cheating on their taxes. IRS agents were being encouraged to go for the wrong kind of quantity; they should have been producing cash, not a list that shows they have been working. The trick is to make the evaluation criteria have something to do with the desired end result.

Overcitation

Government audits are also routine, which makes them far less useful. If you're at the Department of Education and you know that your work will be appraised on the 15th of every month, you've got a pretty good reason to slack off for a few days after audit time passes. The better idea, used to grand effect by the IRS from the thirties until the sixties, is to audit randomly, truly and fairly. The agency saw record high compliance figures back when tax-evaders were convinced that a visit from an agent was within the realm of possibility *anytime*. People knew that there was only a tiny chance they'd ever feel the hot breath of the IRS on their neck, but that slender possibility was enough to make a lot of people think long and hard before taking liberties. Now the government has got matters upside down: audits need to be smart and random, not mindless and regular.

But the major problem is that most evaluation now is entirely numbers oriented—how many Xs are making how many Ys. This rarely yields revealing pictures of what is actually happening to a given program. The guy at Commerce, for instance, who's supposed to oversee an A.I.D. program in Honduras will probably just check the books and make sure that all the money is being spent and all the materials are being delivered, rather than conversing with someone who is administering the program to find out if it is doing any good.

To get useful facts you need auditors to actually *talk* to people. It's simple for the guy at Commerce to tell anyone who asks, "Oh yes, the program is going great, all the money is being spent and all the material is being delivered." But if you want to find out if he knows what

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good the program is doing, you'll have to grill him in much the same way that adept reporters grill their sources. If anyone had bothered to interview mid-level bank inspectors and regulators in the early eighties, they would have heard that inflated real estate appraisals were a time bomb that was going to result in the fiscal meltdown of a lot of savings and loans institutions. You can't get this information by double-checking somebody's math; you have to speak to a real live person.

More interview-style auditing would help the government's perennial communication problem, creating a flow of information about programs from lower echelons, where they are implemented, to higher echelons, where they are imagined and made into law. This may sound like a mind-glazingly academic subject, enough to make even good government types drowsy, but the implications of not moving information around correctly aren't dull—in fact, they're often disastrous. Too often, that new mining regulation, for instance, will leave Washington and no one in town will ever hear or think about it again—until a mine collapses. Only then will it become obvious that something went terribly wrong when that regulation left the capital; it wasn't ever implemented, or it was implemented incorrectly. Usually in these instances, the person who could have told anyone that disaster was imminent isn't consulted. (Remember, what can't be easily quantified, usually doesn't get examined.)

OMBudsmen

Just as commonly, the person who knows about potential disasters speaks up and is ignored. That happens because in any given chain of command, there will be a link or two more interested in pretending that all is well than in hearing the truth. When someone at the bottom warns of the danger of a fire it frequently means embarrassment for someone above, and often superiors don't want to hear about the possible damage. Generally, word gets through only after something goes really wrong or someone blows the whistle. Last month in New York, for instance, a commission convened to hear tales of police corruption the likes of which haven't been news since Serpico was a household word. Why, the commission staff wanted to know, weren't suspicious cases pursued more vigorously? "A message went out into the field," explained Daniel F. Sullivan, a former top cop, "that maybe we shouldn't be so aggressive because the department doesn't want bad press."

The government needs interview-auditors everywhere, and a delta force of them should be deployed at the Office of Management and Budget, the agency which acts as the executive branch's eyes on the government and assesses agencies' budgets. Right now, the executive sends out 3 or 4 OMB employees to appraise an agency's budget request. The agency has a few hundred budget specialists who excel at withholding the truth from OMB. This isn't an even match. Agencies can cook the books gumbo-style and administrations are prevented from finding out whether programs are working. OMB is staffed with 200 budget examiners; nearly all of them are bright people, but few have any training or interest in discussing programs with front-line administrators. What the OMB desperately needs is an additional 400 or so examiners who have the interviewing skills of a good investigative reporter and whose mission is to listen rather than simply calculate. Gore and Clinton may have been nervous about suggesting additional hires, given that much of the report is about the need to cut bloat. But cutting bloat is exactly the argument for giving OMB enough people to figure out what is working and what is a waste of money.

All of this may seem stinting coming from a magazine which has trumpeted many of the themes in the NPR report for more years than we care to remember. But it is precisely our enthusiasm for the bulk of the report that inspires us to offer these ideas. It's easy to rail against over-regulated ash trays and it makes for great television. But if the administration is serious about getting rid of absurd regulations and deadwood jobs it should be equally serious about getting rid of deadwood people and holding workers accountable in effective ways. Gore and Clinton have a historic opportunity and we hope they take it, but without the right kind of evaluation—and the right kind of people—the government can't be reinvented. □

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Down and Out

In the thirties and again in the sixties, Americans answered the call to fight sweeping wars on poverty. Here's why the battle seems so passionless today

BY JON MEACHAM

For a long time now, almost everybody has assumed that, because of the New Deal's social legislation and—more important—the prosperity we have enjoyed since 1940, mass poverty no longer exists in this country. . . [But] in the last year, we seem to have suddenly awakened, rubbing our eyes like Rip van Winkle, to the fact that mass poverty persists, and that it is one of our two gravest social problems. (The other is related: While only 11 percent of our population is nonwhite, 25 percent of our poor are.)

President Kennedy read this in the January 19, 1963, *New Yorker*, in a long review by the critic Dwight Macdonald of Michael Harrington's book *The Other America*. The book and the review together forced a sea change in American attitudes toward the poor. Just five years earlier, in 1958, John Kenneth Galbraith had declared poverty no longer "a massive affliction [but] more nearly an afterthought," and nobody thought to contradict him until Harrington, a socialist journalist, came along.

The Harrington/Macdonald case convinced Kennedy, who had first witnessed large scale poverty in Appalachia during his 1960 West Virginia primary campaign. An antipoverty program was being drafted when the president was murdered, and Lyndon Johnson quickly picked up the standard. "That's my kind of program," he said. What Harrington started turned liberals on to the poverty cause like no other public effort since the New Deal. The sixties' currents, for example, took Jay Rockefeller first to the Peace Corps then to West Virginia to work in antipoverty causes; they also interested people like Eunice Kennedy Shriver, sister of the president and wife of Sargent Shriver, in juvenile delinquency.

Today, 30 years later, the problem is not that the affluent don't know the poor exist but that poverty now seems all too familiar and solutions all too elusive. For those waiting for poverty to become chic again—another Harrington, another New Frontier/Great Society intellectual circle, another crusade—the truth is the poor frustrate most Americans. While 76 percent of voters told Gallup in 1992 that poverty and homelessness were "very

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Jon Meacham is an editor of The Washington Monthly. *Research assistance was provided by Ryan Walsh.*

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important" issues, the percentage who believe government can have a positive impact has fallen from 74 percent in 1960 to 24 percent today. Sixty-five percent are unwilling to pay $200 more a year in taxes for "assisting low-income families." This spring, 66 percent told NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* pollsters that they would like to see cuts in welfare spending.

Thirty-five million Americans live below the poverty line, and 14 million of them (62 percent of whom are non-white) are on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the government's least popular program. The number of poor (defined as an annual income of less than $14,228 for a family of three) rose in 1992; one out of every four American children now live in poverty. While Clinton has expanded the Earned Income Tax Credit (in effect raising a $4.35-an-hour job to a $6-an-hour job) and is seeking universal health insurance—things that will help millions of the working poor—welfare recipients increased 68 percent between 1970 and 1993, especially swelling in times of economic stress. On this most enduring and aggravating piece of the poverty problem—welfare—Clinton's reformers are fuzzy on how they are going to pay for moving people from welfare to work after the promised Clinton two-year limit on AFDC benefits ends.

So don't be fooled by the campaign rage for welfare reform from California to Wisconsin to New Jersey. On the stump, "welfare reform" is a euphemism for cutting spending, and no one who is serious about really solving the problem thinks it can be done for less than double-digit billions. How did we come to this pass of public cynicism and political skittishness? And how do we get out of it?

Images that inspired in the sixties. . .

John F. Kennedy Library/*Charleston (W.Va.) Gazette*

➤***Unlike the last two eras of concern for poverty—the thirties and the sixties—the middle and upper middle classes don't know poor people.***

Though it is difficult to recall now, only recently has America come to think of a "culture of poverty"—a phrase coined in 1959 by Oscar Lewis—or of a permanent "underclass"—a term popularized by Ken Auletta in a landmark 1982 book. How, in the thirties and early forties, did FDR rally support for his social legislation? For one, the democratic effects of the Great Depression meant the middle class was more likely to know people who were poor or even to be poor themselves, however temporarily. In the years after World War I, 2.5 million people left the nation's farms for county seats and big cities but kept up with relatives and old friends who remained in the impoverished countryside. In fact, 68 percent of all families were below the poverty line in the mid-thirties. Harper Lee's description of Maycomb, her fictional Alabama county in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, gives a sense of what life circa 1933 was like: "There was no hurry, for there was nowhere to go, nothing to buy and no money to

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buy it with. . . But it was a time of vague optimism for some of the people: Maycomb County had recently been told it had nothing to fear but fear itself." Consider Atticus Finch, a Maycomb lawyer and himself the first generation to leave the family farm, as he explains to his children, Scout and Jem, why Mr. Cunningham, a farmer/client, pays him in stovewood, hickory nuts, and crates of turnip greens:

> "Why does he pay you like that?" I asked.
> "Because that's the only way he can pay me. He has no money."
> "Are we poor, Atticus?"
> Atticus nodded. "We are indeed."
> Jem's nose wrinkled. "Are we as poor as the Cunninghams?"
> "Not exactly. The Cunninghams are country folks, and the crash hit them the hardest." Atticus said professional people were poor because the farmers were poor. As Maycomb County was farm country, nickels and dimes were hard to come by for doctors and dentists and lawyers.

The point is that the children of the town lawyer knew the Cunninghams, went to school with the Cunningham children, and suffered through the same general experience of the crash. The poor were not thought of then as a separate, problematic class but as people down on their luck. Not to oversentimentalize the thirties, but there is little doubt that because of the geographic and social proximity of the well-off and the poor, because of almost universally used public schools, and because of the universality of the Depression, Americans knew people from differing backgrounds and with differing bank balances more than Americans do now. Today, however, towns and neighborhoods and suburbs are decisively isolated not only by race (this was of course true in the thirties and forties) but by income as well. Working class families are squeezed out of high priced suburbs as better off families secede to their own neighborhoods. And at mid-century, two books—John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* and James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, accompanied by Walker Evans' photographs of poverty—generated sympathy among those few people who had no firsthand experience with the poor.

The good news is that the New Deal and the war economy dramatically reduced the percentage of families living in poverty from the forties onward. From 1936 to 1960, the poverty rate fell from 68 percent to 22 percent, then kept falling through the sixties. (It's now back up to 14.5 percent.) Still, the world in which Johnson launched the War on Poverty had some of the democratic, empathetic atmosphere of the thirties.

For blacks and whites, the country continued to be basically united by the bonds of public education and military service through the sixties. So even if the poor, as Harrington said, constituted a separate country ("The Other America"), Johnson was able to kick off a huge federal effort with public support based on faith in a government that had in the recent past defeated the Depression and Hitler and overseen the postwar economic expansion. In 1965, Gallup found that only 4 percent of the country mentioned the antipoverty program as something they disliked about LBJ's administration, compared to 16 percent for civil rights and 12 percent for Vietnam.

➤***The poor are less obviously deserving today than they used to be.***

Steinbeck's Joads weren't criminals or drug addicts; disproportionate numbers of poor people today *are* criminals or drug addicts. Victims of the Depression or the sharecroppers who flooded the North after World War II could justifiably be portrayed as victims of upheaval. But today, some serious measure of responsibility for the poor and their sorrows clearly lies with the poor. Housing projects become nightmares; inner city schools become war zones; the drug trade becomes the small business of choice.

The causes of social disintegration are vast and complicated, but what we agree is bad—out-of-wedlock births, welfare dependency, crime, dropping out of school, and the susceptibility of subsequent generations to repeat the cycle—all are forms of self-destructive behavior much in evidence in poor neighborhoods. The victims? The law-abiding poor in cities who live in danger because of their neighbors' behavior and who would have been helped by fairer taxes and more public works jobs than the political climate, dominated by images of the underclass, allowed. In a moving report of life in a Wash-

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ington housing project this fall, *The Washington Post* captured these ironies of inner city life well: "Here live the still striving or already defeated poor, the drug abusers and drug dealers. Almost everyone has a brother, a sister, a mother, a father, a cousin or a nephew who has been killed, wounded, or jailed." Yet why were the reporters out on the streets to begin with? Because just days before, a four-year-old girl, Launice Smith, was killed by a gunshot to the head while at an elementary school football game. Sympathy for the child, while real, is also submerged by anger at the chaotic gun and drug and gang culture that killed her. And frustration results.

. . . have became routine photo ops in the nineties.

The cycle is vicious. According to the Union Institute, poor children are three times as likely to drop out of school as middle class kids. Poor mothers are less likely to take their children to government-funded clinics for follow up immunizations. Daughters of welfare mothers are twice as likely as non-welfare daughters to be on public assistance when they are young adults. And while 11 percent of whites are poor, 32 percent of blacks are. An important point, often overlooked, is that stable black families get out of the ghetto as soon as they can. Meanwhile, one out of every four black males will spend some time in jail, prison, or on probation before his early twenties; in the District of Columbia, 66 percent of young black men who go through the justice system will go back through again. In one recent year, black youths accounted for 45 percent of the nation's arrests for murder and manslaughter, 54 percent for forcible rape, 68 percent for robbery, and 39 percent for aggravated assault.

The public image of welfare exacerbates the problem of generating empathy and action for the poor. The average stay, despite liberal protestations to the contrary, is 11.6 years, according to studies by David Ellwood, the Harvard professor who is now an assistant secretary of Health and Human Services. Welfare rewards single mothers who have more children by increasing their check accordingly; often, it's difficult to find an entry-level job that pays as well as the dole.

➤***The Great Society, because of the perception that its antipoverty programs didn't work, provoked enormous frustration.***

As poverty endured despite the Job Corps and a generation of reform, from the sixties' Comprehensive Employment and Training Act to the eighties' Job Training Partnership Act, many of the same kinds of people whom the Harrington book reached began to turn against large government programs to combat poverty. Public aid expenditures rose faster in Nixon/Ford/Carter years than they had in the Johnson years, and the number of poor people grew as well. Rates of progress are indeed slow and small; according to evaluations of 16 major current state welfare-to-work programs by the Manpower Research Demonstration Corporation, about the best result is a 10 to 20 percent cut in welfare receipts. That's the *best* scenario.

In his 1991 book *The Promised Land*, Nicholas Lemann explores the seminal postwar migration. Between 1940 and 1970, five million blacks left the Southern countryside for Chicago and other cities, and Lemann details how the federal War on Poverty, especially in the ghettos where the immigrants landed, was lost. The Office of Economic Op-

Black Star

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portunity (OEO), the war's headquarters, mistakenly staked its finances and its reputation on local "community action agencies" on the theory that grassroots activists could best structure Head Start programs, literacy classes, and housing rehabilitation. (Jack Kemp, call your think tank. There is no thing new under the sun.) But local politicians from Chicago's Mayor Daley to Mississippi's Senator Eastland resented federal money going through rival political channels, and the community organizers often had no experience running anything, much less a complicated battle against poverty.

Although the OEO had notable successes—Head Start is a demonstrated winner, for example, and thousands of new government jobs employed blacks who in turn became a part of the middle class—Lemann points out that when the Newark community action agency staged a play by LeRoi Jones that featured Jack Benny's butler Rochester killing white people, OEO's better moments were decidedly overshadowed.

So we know *how* the war was generally lost, but the harder question is *why* it was lost. Solutions have eluded politicians and reporters. Alex Kotlowitz, for example, wrote a powerful story in *The Wall Street Journal* in 1987 that became a book, *There Are No Children Here*, chronicling how heartbreakingly scary ghetto life is for two little boys in a Chicago housing project. The book tells us what's wrong but not how to fix it. In the eighties, reports like the *Chicago Tribune*'s 32-part series on the city's West Side underclass and Bill Moyers' 1986 CBS News special, "The Vanishing Family: Crisis in Black America," made poverty a familiar image. In fact, from 1982 to 1992, network evening news stories on poverty, welfare, unemployment, or homelessness in the U.S. outnumbered stories on abortion, 1,327 to 964.

"Clearly, the tendency is to treat poverty as an emotional issue, not as hard news," says Michael Moss, a reporter for *Newsday* who studied the media's poverty coverage in the eighties. The people who do treat it as hard news and turn an uncompromising eye to programs and how they work are forced to confront the fact that very little works. This sense is what prompted a middle class voter in Kansas City in 1992 to say this to a political pollster when asked about social spending:

> I'm tired of paying for everything. The middle income person gets to pay for everything. The rich get all their little loopholes. They don't pay any taxes and the poor people don't have the taxes to pay. So what happens? More and more taxes come out of our paychecks. . .They say they're going to do all these wonderful good things and they never get to those things. They go for administration, or fancy cars, or all kinds of little perks. How much dribbles down to the people or the thing that it's really earmarked for?

➤ ***To the extent that there has been widespread concern for the poor in the last dozen years, it's been focused on the homeless, a problem which was badly analyzed, went unsolved, and accordingly increased frustration.***

Certainly, it's terrible when an upstanding wage earner (picture Henry Fonda as Tom Joad in the movie version of *The Grapes of Wrath*) is, through no fault of his own, thrown onto the streets. But how many street people are actually displaced wage earners the system has let down? A good guess is very, very few. The story of homelessness in recent times is a story of how liberals, with a phony diagnosis and a phony prescription, can do more harm than good in bringing attention to the poor.

For much of the decade, homeless advocates like the late Mitch Snyder played a masterful media game, attracting coverage and forcing sympathetic factoids into the public debate. Snyder, for example, generated headlines and captured news footage when he appeared at a congressional hearing in the fall of 1980 toting the cremated remains of "John Doe," the first homeless man to freeze to death in Washington the previous winter.

The liberal antidote was more shelters, more housing, and more jobs—sensible enough solutions if in fact the homeless were stable enough just to need housing to get back on their feet. But a 1992 report in just one state—New York—reflects nationwide realities about the

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true nature of the problem. Two-thirds of the single men and a third of the adults in families in New York City's shelters were addicted to drugs or alcohol; a third to a fourth of the nation's homeless, according to the Urban Institute, are mentally ill.

This might have surprised editors and reporters. After all, according to a study of magazine and TV news from 1986 to 1989, homeless stories identified only 7 percent of the homeless as abusers and indicated 50 percent were employed. But this news probably didn't surprise most of the people who saw the homeless on the streets day in and day out, sometimes deranged and more conversant with phantoms than with passersby. The liberal critique, forwarded by Snyder, New York Rep. Charles Schumer, the National Coalition for the Homeless, and others, was that if affordable housing was available, the problem would largely go away. Alice S. Baum and Donald W. Burnes, in a new study called *A Nation in Denial: The Truth About the Homeless*, note that half of those in New York City who are placed in permanent housing return to the shelter system, and Jacqueline Williams, a Washington women with 14 children who famously received housing after pleading her case on "Donahue" in 1989, eventually lost her children to foster care and, after a year, the housing she had been given was so trashed that it was declared unfit for human habitation.

Because of the cost, Clinton will probably have to break his promise to put welfare recipients to work after two years, thereby revealing a political dirty secret: Welfare has endured because it's the cheapest way to keep people alive.

Housing is the answer for some people—the Tom Joads—but it is not the answer for those with a myriad of other problems. Nevertheless, this October, Clinton's Department of Housing and Urban Development offered a $20 million grant to the District of Columbia with a skewed set of goals: 1,000 permanent housing units, 100 job training slots, and 400 places in substance abuse centers. What's really needed are more slots in clinics and mental health homes. As the public has come to see the government's reaction as a phony analysis of a complex problem, sympathy that would properly go to solving the specific problems of the different kinds of poor—tax breaks for working families, treatment and supervised permanent shelter for the mentally ill, and larger assaults on ghetto poverty—has dried up.

Work Fair

There is a strong temptation to ferret out small programs that work and declare that *if only we could do this everywhere*, then all would be well. Although anecdotal successes tend to sputter out on the national stage, consider two such projects which, while limited in scope, run on the right principles and can be viewed in the same light as a baseball player who hits .300—which is considered a great year even when the guy failed on seven out of 10 trips to the plate.

➤***The guarantee of a fair chance.*** America's most enduring principle—that work will be rewarded—is little more than a pipe dream in poor neighborhoods. But there is evidence that once people are promised a payoff for hard work, they respond. In Kansas City in 1988, the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation went to Westport High School (Kauffman's alma mater), an inner city school where the majority of students were poor enough to qualify for free lunches, test scores were low, and the dropout rate was 70 percent. In exchange for taking random drug tests and staying in school, Kauffman would finance the kids' college or help them get into a craft after graduation. Once the offer was made, 47.9 percent graduated, compared to 30.9 percent before. "We had kids who didn't know how to work, kids whose mothers had been on welfare for 13 years, first-gener-

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ation kids to even make it past the eighth grade," says Tom Roane, the project director. "It took a lot of tutoring and a lot of talking." Long term investment in education is clearly the antidote for much of what's wrong. The lesson is clear: Dedicated teachers and intense volunteer work in these schools and neighborhoods is effective. And the guarantee that Kauffman provided at Westport—that virtue will be rewarded—ought to be offered to everyone.

➤***Hammer away at the work ethic.*** Daniel Patrick Moynihan had it basically right in 1988 with his landmark Family Support Act, the latest attempt to link welfare with work. While implementation has been poor—less than two thirds of the available funds were taken by the states in 1992—one success story is California, which has the largest welfare rolls in the country. The Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) program produced increased earnings for welfare recipients in several counties. In the largest, Riverside, administrators plugged the message that jobs were central, even low paying jobs. (In fact, job placement rates per caseworker were figured in assessing *staff* performance.) The results? In Riverside, GAIN participants' earnings rose 59 percent in the first year, 53 percent in the second.

Hard Times

Flash successes will not alone overcome the the broad reasons we are frustrated with the poor. But those broad reasons *can* be licked. While we cannot count on a crisis like the Depression to bring us together, the more government does to make public schools attractive and the more young people take part in things like national service, the more Americans will again feel connected to one another. Informed by renewed democratic empathy, antipoverty programs could then be convincingly sold as an important enterprise.

Why should Americans answer appeals to help poor people who are not clearly deserving? Because most Americans sense that something is very wrong. And even those not moved by charitable impulses have to know that tremendous numbers of tax dollars are going just to police the streets and jail offenders. Consider, too, that in the 10 largest U.S. cities the average unemployment rate is 36 percent for all black men and 54 percent among black men aged 18 to 29, according to sociologists Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton. A localized problem might lend itself to localized solutions like Kauffman or GAIN.

When LBJ declared "unconditional war on poverty" in 1964 (in a speech written by Kennedy aide Theodore Sorensen), there was no real yardstick for victory. Clinton's task is to define achievable missions and build credibility for more missions down the road. Making promises that cannot be kept is only going to frustrate people more and make any fight more difficult. And that's exactly what may happen, because while solutions require more than money, they certainly require some money, and the irony is that we are already spending less on direct public aid than most people think. When Lemann was on a national book tour for *The Promised Land*, he would ask audiences to guess what percentage of the federal budget welfare took up every year. The average estimate was 50 percent—the truth, counting food stamps, housing, and AFDC, is closer to 5 percent.

In *The End of Equality*, Mickey Kaus projects that his own neo-WPA proposal—abolish AFDC, give every able bodied poor person a public sector job—would run about $50 billion a year. Even to pay for GAIN-like and school programs in every state would cost $15 to $20 billion. Right now, Clinton's welfare reformers have no plan even to pay for the public sector jobs—each costs about $12,000—for the million or so welfare recipients who won't get off the dole by the end of two years. So Clinton will probably have to break the two-year promise, thereby revealing the dirty secret of the political class: The reason welfare has endured so long is that, in cash terms, it's the cheapest way to handle the problem. You keep people alive with an average monthly payment of $388 per family, plus food stamps. It's not pretty, but it's cheap.

Dwight Macdonald, long ago in the beginning of the Great Society, thought he saw an enduring truth: "There is a monotony to the injustices suffered by the poor that perhaps accounts for the lack of interest the rest of society shows in them. Everything seems to go wrong with them. They never win. It's just boring." A witty line, but Macdonald frames the issue in the wrong way. The "injustices suffered by the poor" are boring. But the more we can talk about solutions for the poor, the less frustrating they will become. And the less poor. □

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Tidbits & Outrages

AND ON REALLY GRIM DAYS, THEY HAD TO GO WITHOUT CAPPUCINO

A *Los Angeles Times* story about a local monthly, *Buzz*, described the magazine's start-up period with these words: "Money was so tight, recalls Collinsworth, the partners couldn't afford to heat the pool at the Richard Neutra-designed estate on Mulholland Drive that they had transformed into home and office."

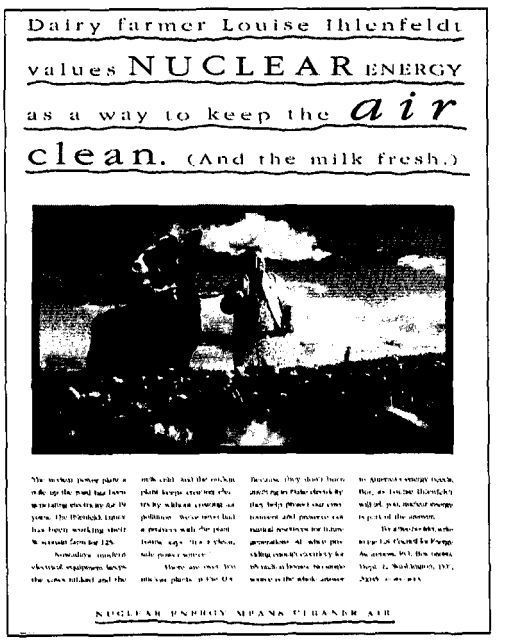
GREAT MOMENTS IN STATE GOVERNMENT I

The Oregon House of Representatives recently considered requiring every household in the state to possess a gun.

GREAT MOMENTS IN STATE GOVERNMENT II

In a legislative hearing, California Assemblywoman Kathleen Honeycutt said of a proposed bill: "It gives the contractor great leverage to kind of jew down the subcontractor if he is going to have to wait for the money."

. . . AND THE COWS GLOWING


Dairy farmer Louise Ihlenfeldt values NUCLEAR ENERGY as a way to keep the *air* clean. (And the milk fresh.)

THE BANK OF SWEDEN: WE TAKE THE WORRY OUT OF BEING DEAD

In Sweden, the body of a woman lay undiscovered in her apartment for three years after she died because computers automatically received her pension checks and paid her bills.

"TONIGHT, REPORTS ABOUT FLOODING IN THE MIDWEST AND SHELLING IN BOSNIA, BUT FIRST..."

Los Angeles television station KCAL gave live news coverage to the unveiling of likenesses of "Green Acres" stars Eva Gabor and Eddie Albert at the Movieland Wax Museum.

—Scott Shuger

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Good Help Isn't Hard to Find

You don't have taxpayer-subsidized workers to help you keep your job. So why should your congressman?

BY FRANK GREVE

When Texas Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison was indicted last month for using state employees to make campaign fund-raising calls and using a state computer to keep track of contributions, there had to be a few quickened pulses on Capitol Hill. After all, Washington incumbents are accustomed to using their offices for partisan work.

Consider:

➤Two weeks before last fall's election, retiring Rep. Glenn Anderson dispatched five congressional aides to California where they campaigned for Anderson's chosen successor, Evan Braude, his stepson, at taxpayers' expense.

➤Rep. Les AuCoin, running hard for Oregon's Senate seat, flew eight Hill aides out last fall for a total of 189 days. Taxpayers paid their salaries and airfares because they frequently worked days in AuCoin's district office, says former aide Bob Crane. Nights, weekends, vacations, and comp time they spent campaigning for AuCoin.

➤Rep. John Conyers, chairman of the House Government Operations Committee that investigates federal waste, out-did them both, enlisting 14 members of his staff in one way or another in his Detroit reelection campaign. Among the aides' taxpayer-paid "official representational duties" was handing out thousands of Conyers' press releases at shopping centers and churches shortly before election day.

Overall, at least 70 incumbents summoned two or more federally-paid Washington aides to their districts late in their campaigns, House expense records indicate. Typically, lawmakers claimed, "official business" required their aides' presence. Just as typically, that business ended on election day. Aides who are skilled political fighters and whose futures are riding on their bosses' reelection are one big reason that incumbents won 93 percent of the races they entered last fall, down just slightly from their 95 percent rate in the eighties. "They're part of the permanent campaign, right along with franking. It's a terrible, terrible abuse,"

Frank Greve is a national correspondent for Knight-Ridder.

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says Sara Fritz, a *Los Angeles Times* political finance analyst and co-author of *The Handbook of Campaign Spending*.

Most folks don't get publicly-funded assistants to help them keep their jobs, and it's unclear why congressmen should be an exception. But pending campaign reforms do not address campaigning by aides or a second widespread abuse among incumbents seeking reelection: the use of franked mail as a campaign tool. Fund raising aside, those are the two key advantages most frequently exploited by incumbents in their campaigns. The only restraints on incumbent House campaigners—who are generally considered more audacious than their Senate counterparts—is the tough-sounding but toothless House Ethics Manual.

The 493-page guide bars incumbents from using government funds to campaign. But there's a catch: Almost anything is admissable when it's billed as "constituent service." The manual also permits aides to campaign only on their own time. But there's a catch here, too: Lawmakers decide when the workday is done, when aides have earned comp time, and when they can take vacations.

"After Congress lets out in mid-October, it's amazing how many staffers show up in the district hammering in yard signs," says J. Kevin Broughton, a former press aide to Rep. Bob McEwen of Ohio, a member who lost last fall. "It's wrong, but incumbents have an incredible, unfair advantage." Among Broughton's most important assignments last summer, he recalls, was creating a newsletter lauding the boss, who faced a tough primary battle. "It was nothing but glorifying the incumbent, but we disguised it as informing constituents and sent out hundreds of thousands of copies as franked mail," says Broughton.

Bill Holbrook

The ethics manual notes that incumbents cannot use their frank for mass mailings within 60 days of a primary or general election. But that doesn't curb campaigners' use of the frank so much as channel it. In the final week before the deadline last year, pallets of "official communications" awaiting pick-up by postal workers made the corridors outside the House printer virtually impassable. Elections just after redistricting, like the last one, also lay bare the timeless ruse that franked mass mailings are non-political communications with constituents. Inevitably, these letters were mailed not to constituents who elected the member, but to those in the new district whom lawmakers sought to impress. That's fine by the obliging House Ethics committee, so long as some portion of the old district is included in the new district.

Frank Incensed

Most aides are mum or vague about campaign work, but when McEwen's troops vacated their House office, they left some tell-tale clues behind on the office computer. The documents disclosed by his successor, Ted Strickland, began to show how aides helped McEwen without ever leaving the federal payroll.

A press release, for example, begins: "'Ted Strickland's got a lot of nerve,' campaign manager Barbara Briggs said after more bogus charges from the perennial candidate." Briggs' title and her tirade may have made her sound like a campaign staffer, but House financial records indicate that she was on McEwen's congressional payroll at the time, earning $43,000.

The ethics manual requires that campaign work "Be kept out of the congressional office." But a loophole sets Briggs free. Splitting time

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between the campaign and official duties is okay, if the boss approves and clear distinctions are maintained on timesheets. Federal Election Commission (FEC) records indicate Briggs earned an additional $11,937 salary from McEwen's campaign while serving on his staff. She says she has "no idea" how much time she actually spent on official versus campaign work.

Another aide, William Pascoe III, earned $40,000 as McEwen's chief of staff while soliciting contributions for McEwen in his spare time. Some of the memos on the office computer were his, Pascoe acknowledges. "But I did them at home, on my computer." Fund raising for the boss is okay too, as the ethics manual says, as long as aides do it on their own time, outside federal facilities. McEwen declined comment on his campaigning aides, unless he could speak off the record.

A half dozen such talented volunteers can easily be worth $100,000 to an incumbent, based on the cost of political consultants of comparable talent. That's substantial help, considering that House campaigns cost, on average, $197,000 last year, according to the FEC.

For challengers, an incumbent's campaigning aides are likely to be stealthy, as well as potent, forces. "Clearly, a good number of his staff were working on his reelection," recalls Republican Dennis Shea, who lost to incumbent Rep. Thomas Manton of New York last fall. "But only Inspector Clouseau could tell whether they were working on official time or their own time." (Steven Vest, an aide to Manton, says staffers did not campaign while receiving federal pay.)

Though some aides are skittish on the subject, it's clear that pounding the pavement for the boss during election time is now part of Capitol Hill culture. To David Coggin, top aide to California's Rep. Ron Packard, getting his boss reelected is simply part of the job. "I'm the third chief of staff here, and with all of us it's been the same—you take your vacation and run the campaign." Packard paid Coggin $14,000 as a campaign consultant on top of his $94,000 congressional salary.

Other aides volunteered and were rewarded with promotions, raises, or bonuses once their bosses were reelected. Two top Republicans, for example, House Minority Whip Newt Gingrich of Georgia and Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska, repaid campaigning staffers with year-end cash gifts in 1990. Stevens used campaign funds; Gingrich, government funds.

Because publication of House office expense records lags three months or longer behind outlays, it's impossible for challengers—or reporters—to learn during a campaign's heat whether aides remain on the federal payroll. The ethics manual states that they "should keep careful records documenting that campaign work was not done on official time." But many don't, and some lawmakers, like Conyers, refuse to disclose what leave or vacation time aides took for campaign work.

For instance, two aides to the delegate from American Samoa even flew to Pago Pago at government expense for the 1992 campaign's last 20 days. Did they do any official business 7,500 miles from Washington? "Not really. We took annual leave and we campaigned," one of the aides, Aliimau H. Scanlan, Jr. initially replied. But, Scanlan was reminded, their $2,300 in air fares was justified as "official business." "Oh, I forgot," Scanlan said after a pause. "I made an earlier trip out in August and we campaigned." He declined to produce those travel records, however.

Seem outrageous? Fact is, the rules are so lax that aides have to fudge them much more blatantly than Scanlan to make any trouble for themselves. The only lawmaker who may have run afoul of campaigning rules is retired Rep. Anderson, whose staff helped his stepson, Evan Braude, in a close loss. According to Braude, the FBI is investigating whether his stepfather—but not Braude—misused government resources. Although the Justice Department rarely and reluctantly intervenes in legislative matters, lawmakers can be charged with fraud if they "compensate individuals from public monies for campaign services." Anderson referred to his wife, Lee, as a campaign adviser to her son; she insists aides campaigned on their own time.

The House Ethics committee doesn't care. Only seated members fall within its jurisdiction, meaning that its rules apply only to winners. When exploiting free campaign help, it seems, incumbents just can't lose. □

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Memo of the Month

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service
Agency for Toxic Substances
and Disease Registry

Memorandum

Date August 16, 1993

From Director, Division of Health Assessment and Consultation, ATSDR (E32)

Subject Management Retreat Highlights

To DHAC Staff

Attached are the highlights of the DHAC Management Retreat held April 7-9, 1993. The anticipated outcomes from the retreat are listed below.

- Improvements in communication and mutual exchange of information about our future work environment.
- Development of leadership support for potential ways in which we can respond to our future environment.
- Better understanding of how we can modify or enhance our internal systems to support our approach for coping with our external environment.
- Avoid creating a lot of new work for the communication effort of the retreat.

Though the realignment of the division has not yet been completed, discussions at the management retreat have helped to understand many of the concerns shared by the functional units of DHAC.

Robert C. Williams, P.E., DEE

Attachment

cc:
Barry Johnson
William Adams
Division/Office Directors

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Journal Fever

U-turns, half-truths, philosophical pirouettes, and shoddy reporting: Is the Wall Street Journal*'s editorial page shell shocked or simply out of its mind?*

BY BILL GIFFORD

Two weeks and a day after becoming a lame duck, George Bush was flipping through the morning's *Wall Street Journal* when an editorial caught his eye. Headlined "EPA's Most Wanted," it was about a man named Bill Ellen "who is about to go to prison for violating the federal government's wetlands policy."

Ellen was an engineer working on the Eastern Shore spread of Paul Tudor Jones II, the Wall Street trading whiz. In 1987, Ellen began building a 100-acre "wildlife sanctuary" on Jones' property. Since the sanctuary was to be built on wetlands, Ellen, according to the *Journal*, "was careful to work with officials from the Soil Conservation Service and the Army Corps of Engineers and secured 38 permits for the work."

"Then, in 1989, the federal government, eager to implement President Bush's pledge of 'no net loss' of wetlands, issued a new manual redefining them." Armed with the new definition, the Corps declared Ellen's project a wetland and ordered him to stop work—which he did, according to the *Journal*, in February 1989. But a couple of days later, he allowed two truckloads of dirt to be dumped in a "duck pond." The feds later indicted Ellen and Jones. Jones pled guilty to filling wetlands, and paid $2 million in fines and restitution; a jury convicted Ellen, and he was sentenced to six months in jail.

"No one is safe from an overzealous government enforcement campaign that treats all things wet as equal," the *Journal* declared. "At a time when drug dealers and other criminals often escape with no jail time, this Vietnam combat veteran can't understand why he must go to prison over a bureaucrat's interpretation of an ambiguous congressional law." The paper called on Bush to pardon Ellen.

Disturbed by this Kafkaesque tale, Bush asked White House counsel C. Boyden Gray to review Ellen's case to see whether a pardon might be justified.

Weeks passed, but no pardon came down. The *Journal* published a handful of letters supporting Ellen and expressing outrage at the government's

Bill Gifford is an associate editor of Washington City Paper.

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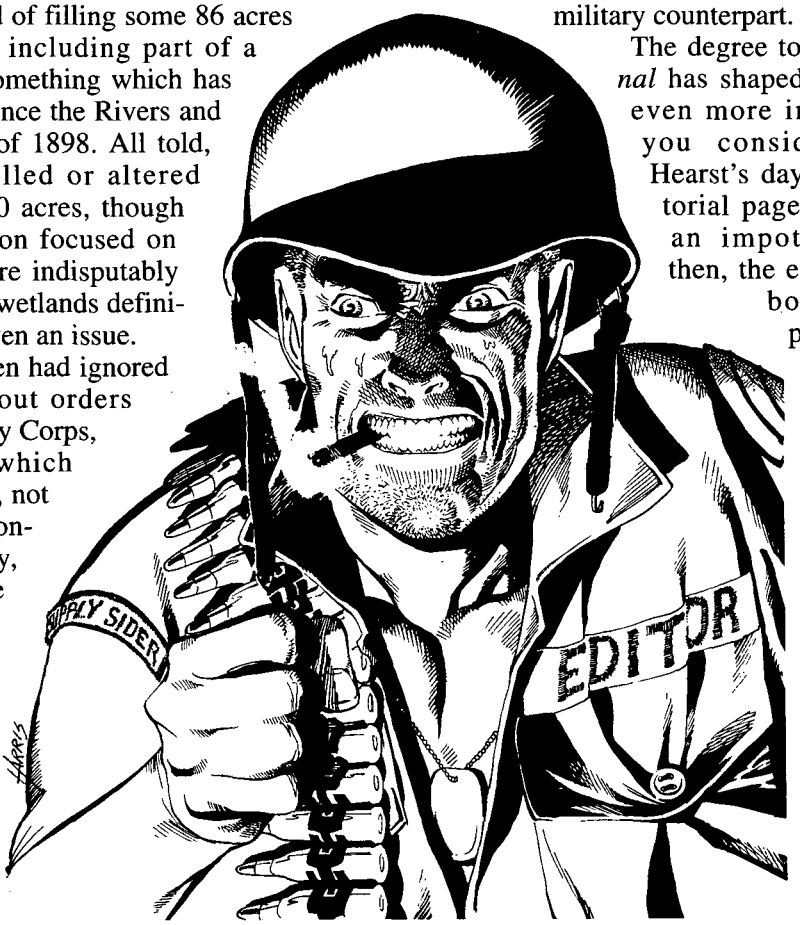
conduct. Apparently there was no space to print rebutting letters from the prosecutor, Maryland U.S. Attorney Breckenridge Willcox, or his successor, Richard Bennett.

On January 15, the *Journal* revisited the matter in a lead editorial titled "The Ellen Pardon," a guns-blazing broadside against federal wetlands law—all of it. Then Bush went, Clinton came, and Bill Ellen sat in jail.

A miscarriage of justice? Not exactly. What Boyden Gray had quickly discovered was that the *Journal*'s account of Ellen's case, apparently based on conversations with his lawyers, bore only the slightest resemblance to the truth. For starters, the "sanctuary" was a hunting lodge. Ellen hadn't violated some bureaucratic "manual," but the Clean Water Act of 1972. He was convicted of filling some 86 acres of wetlands, including part of a tidal creek, something which has been illegal since the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1898. All told, Ellen had filled or altered close to 1,000 acres, though the prosecution focused on areas that were indisputably wet; the new wetlands definition wasn't even an issue.

Worse, Ellen had ignored three cut-it-out orders from the Army Corps, the first of which came in 1988, not 1989. That convinced a jury, and the Fourth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals, that he certainly did know he was breaking the law. Furthermore, this was no rogue prosecution, but one that had been approved at the highest levels of Justice.

It's remarkable that the *Journal* would end the Reagan-Bush years on such an ignominious note. The paper's editorial page had practically set the table for the supply-side feast, and it remained a key forum for Republican policymakers and conservative intellectuals throughout Bush's term. Beginning in the mid-1970s, the *Journal*'s Jude Wanniski published column after column on supply-side theory, transforming Arthur Laffer's odd little curve from a joke of the economics world into official policy—a feat to rival William Randolph Hearst's instigation of the Spanish-American War in 1898. The *Journal* also midwifed Star Wars, supply-side's military counterpart.



The degree to which the *Journal* has shaped public policy is even more impressive when you consider that since Hearst's day, the typical editorial page has withered to an impotent nub. Back then, the editorial page embodied and expressed a newspaper's soul. It was the designated free-fire zone where scores were settled and skirmishes provoked in thunderous copy that would traumatize today's fragile sensibilities. Now, it survives as a gangrenous appendage of that dying beast, the daily newspaper. The editorial pages of even

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the greatest papers in the land are little more than repositories of conventional wisdom, grindstones for dull axes.

By comparison, the *Journal* is a geyser. As pungently conservative as its peers are blandly liberal, as combative as they are gun-shy, the *Journal* harks back without shame to the age of a fiercely partisan press. Its energetic scribes, many plucked from conservative college rags like *The Dartmouth Review*, will leave no sacred liberal cow ungored. Taking full advantage of their anonymity, they regularly drub liberals, errant and otherwise. It's probably the only newspaper in America that would urge a new president to "bomb Congress."

Supervising this *Journal*istic Delta House is Robert Bartley, who for 21 years has held the title of Editor, editing a page and a half of commentary plus another of arts. When he took the reins in 1972, Bartley transformed the editorial page from a sleepy purveyor of blue-chip conservatism into an aggressive, illustrious neoconservative forum. His own lack of formal economics training did not hinder him from winning a Pulitzer in 1980 for his supply-side commentary.

The page takes intellectual guidance from a board of contributors gleaming with luminaries such as Paul Craig Roberts and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.; its guru and godfather is Irving Kristol. Almost all outside contributors share the basic views of Bartley and his youthful staff; regular liberal columnists Alexander Cockburn, Hodding Carter III, and Michael Kinsley were phased out in 1991. Today the page serves as the right's exclusive bulletin board. If it sometimes seems like a tired reciter of the conservative line—its obsessions with term limits and the capital gains tax are beyond tedious—remember that it helped to redraw that line.

Bartley, who started at the *Journal* as a bureau reporter, also helped invent a new genre, the reported editorial. Where editorialists at other papers content themselves with gumming over yesterday's headlines, the *Journal*'s eager-beavers *actually make phone calls*, digging up stories on a range of subjects. Nothing is too trivial or obscure, if it can be properly spun to fit the *Journal*'s worldview. So, to pick a random example, the plight of the Great Circus Bim Bom, a Russian troupe which chose to remain stranded and broke in the U.S. rather than return home, permitted the page to take a dig at Gorbachev (in mid-1990): "We guess this means that even zero dollars are still worth more than perestroika's rubles."

"That's what editorials are," Bartley told a newly hired Jude Wanniski in 1972, according to Sidney Blumenthal in *The Rise of the Counter-Establishment*. "The ideology finds the news."

Ideo-logic

The ideology seems to fluctuate between free-market libertarianism, the Republican platform, and a kind of neo-Victorian prudery (some of the funniest pieces deal with sex). Imagine Ayn Rand as a GOP operative and you get the picture. Bartley's principal innovation is to adopt the techniques of lefty agitprop, which he then trains upon the left, a tactic rather like fighting Amazon tribesmen with curare-tipped darts. What do liberals want to do? Help the downtrodden, especially minorities. So the *Journal* promotes welfare reform as a way to *help* blacks out of poverty; it touts NAFTA because free trade will *help* Mexicans. Welfare fans and NAFTA foes, it implies, are racist.

And rather than red-bait its ideological opponents, the *Journal* sticks them with leftism's favorite epithets. When Clarence Thomas was named to the federal bench, it dubbed his upcoming confirmation fight "The Next Lynching." Congress became "The Liberal Plantation," where massuhs Ted Kennedy and Joe Biden lash uppity black conservatives. Never mind the energetic whupping the *Journal* dishes out to black liberals. A variation on this is name-switching. In one of many editorials it ran supporting a school-choice proposal for inner-city Milwaukee children, the page compared the leading voucher opponent, schools superintendent Herbert Grover, to Arkansas segregationist Orval Faubus.

To open the *Journal*'s "Review & Outlook" page is to enter a looking-glass world where everything is reversed: Clarence Thomas is a nimble jurist and William Brennan a dangerous buffoon; Edwin Meese is a pillar of integrity and Lawrence Walsh a lowlife sleaze. The page and its outside contributors were stalwart defenders of Robert Bork, Michael Milken, and the whole herd of Iran-contra de-

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fendants—every eighties villain, in fact, except Jim Wright.

History is often rewritten on the editorial page. From the *Journal*'s unique perspective, the murder of abortion doctor David Gunn by a pro-life fanatic was the natural outcome of—get ready—the sixties. Last March, in an amazing screed headlined "No Guardrails," deputy editor Dan Henninger blamed the peace and love decade for Gunn's murder. How? The sixties destroyed traditional notions of decency and rational discourse and reasonable disagreement, according to Henninger. "We think it is possible to identify the date when the U.S., or more precisely when many people within it, began to tip off the emotional tracks," he wrote: August 1968. The Democratic National Convention that month, and its attendant chaos, inaugurated an era of hotheaded political fanaticism of the sort that led Michael Griffin to shoot Dr. Gunn. No doubt '68 was some kind of watershed, but only the *Journal* could turn that year into a wellspring of 1993's anti-abortion violence.

All of this might be excused as spirited intellectual horseplay, especially by those who hope the page can serve as a tart-tongued voice of opposition to the new administration. On a good day, that's what it does. But to ever greater degrees, the *Journal* page steps past being obstreperous and into the realm of intellectual dishonesty; it has all but abandoned any pretense to participating in a rational argument. More and more, the page now traffics in unseemly nastiness backed by flimsy reasoning, the "Who is Vincent Foster?" series being only the most notorious example. When the ideologues can't "find the news," the ideologues sometimes make it up, ignoring facts whenever convenient and contradicting past pronouncements whenever necessary.

Take their views—plural—on the subject of polygraphs. In the thick of the Clarence Thomas confirmation battle, Anita Hill took and passed a lie detector test. In the next day's editorial, presciently titled "Credibility Gulch," the *Journal* quoted prior statements by Ted Kennedy, Howard Metzenbaum, and Paul Simon doubting the validity of polygraphs. The writer added, "Lie detector tests are so unreliable they are rarely allowed as evidence in court."

Barely eight months later, as Lawrence Walsh prepared to indict former Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, the *Journal* changed its mind (and earned itself a "Dart" from the *Columbia Journalism Review*). In attacking the prosecution and calling for a presidential pardon, the page repeated Weinberger's defense: "If there was a conspiracy, he wasn't part of it."

How do we know he wasn't part of it? "Mr. Weinberger has taken and passed a lie detector test on the matter," the *Journal* wrote.

Ronald Reagan

Almost as astonishing was the *Journal*'s recent U-turn on the subject of federal funding for the arts. Since the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) controversy erupted, the paper has repeatedly questioned the need for any art subsidies—whether the subsidized art is "obscene" or not. "Real Artists Don't Take Handouts" proclaimed the headline of a piece by Phillip Kauffman, a non-subsidized novelist. In another, Irving Kristol inveighed against the idea that "taxpayers' money should discover and encourage something called 'creativity' in the arts." Kristol added, "Surely this is best left to individual initiative and private financing."

The *Journal*'s editorialists chimed in on February 26, 1992: "Notwithstanding the claque that seems to view endowment funding as a political 'right,' we think that a government agency that puts its money on the line has the right to make judgments about a work's value."

Which the NEA did this spring, as it reviewed the grant application of the *Hudson Review*, a prestigious Manhattan quarterly. When an NEA panel failed to recommend the *Review* for a grant, the *Journal* published a scathing op-ed by Roger Kimball, managing editor of *The New Criterion* and a frequent *Journal* contributor. "Diversity Quotas at NEA Skewer Magazine," shrieked the June 24 headline. In a

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confidential letter that the magazine evidently leaked, the NEA informed the editors that its panel felt "writers of color were significantly under-represented in the *Hudson Review*."

Robert Bork

"We do not have to wait for a new director of the NEA to know what direction support for the arts will take in the Clinton administration," Kimball wrote.

Perhaps, but Clinton had nothing to do with this particular PC travesty. The offending panel had been selected by Bush appointees. And the "diversity quotas"—the NEA's standard grant guidelines, which encourage "inclusion of women and writers from racially and culturally diverse backgrounds"—were written and approved by Bushies, too.

The *Journal* had spent three years condemning the arts-funding-is-a-right "claque," only to turn around and join it. Perhaps real art journals do need handouts, after all; indeed, it turns out that the federal arts subsidizers had been doing their best to help the crusty, fusty *Hudson Review* uphold Western civilization. Since 1977, its editors have cashed NEA checks totalling $70,437. Within a week after Kimball's piece ran, they were on the phone to the NEA, seeking assistance with next year's grant application.

Also rejected in that round of NEA funding were two equally august publications, *Paris Review* and *Antaeus*. The problem was not political correctness but lack of funds. One reason why NEA has less money to disburse to small magazines, ironically, is the political heat brought to bear by the *Journal* and its allies.

It's just this sort of thing that's coming back to haunt Bartley, now that the '90s *Journal* regularly commits the very same sins for which the '80s *Journal* castigated liberals. Violating its own published rules of engagement, it has even developed a taste for borking.

Fax Checking

No newspaper championed Robert Bork more loudly and more frequently than the *Journal*. Almost daily, during the fall of 1987, the paper countered Bork's often hysterical opposition. So obsessed was it that when the stock market fell 91 points on the October day when Howell Heflin came out against Bork, the *Journal*'s editorialists saw cause and effect, and dubbed it "The Bork Market."

The best of these pieces were written by then-assistant editor Gordon Crovitz, whose thoughtful exegeses of Bork's words and deeds, particularly his civil rights record, parried Ted Kennedy's claim that Bork would "turn back the clock to the days of segregated lunch counters." The *Journal* saved its sharpest words for the Bork opponents' tactics, which it likened to Joe McCarthy's: their distortions of his record; "extrapolating" his views; quoting him out of context; calling him names. If you'd read its outraged commentary, you might have thought the *Journal* would be above such intellectual sleaze.

Nonetheless, the borking of Lani Guinier began with an April 30 op-ed by conservative legal activist Clint Bolick, who is practically an adjunct *Journal* staffer. The page regularly advances his crusades, from the nomination of his close friend Clarence Thomas to pet legal matters, such as the Milwaukee school-voucher case. Although he's as close as the right-wing gets to a Ralph Nader, Bolick is somehow exempted from the page's regular denunciation of hyperactive litigators; editorial writer John Fund is an old friend.

"Clinton's Quota Queens," which ran the day after Clinton nominated Guinier as assistant attorney general for civil rights, is a masterpiece of borking. In the space of a few hundred words, Bolick cobbles together a handful of partial quotes from Guinier's turgid, lengthy law review articles, adding a few of his own broad-brush characterizations, to portray her as a "Quota Queen." It was a catchy label, echoing Reagan's legendary welfare queens, and it stuck.

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Bolick's characterization of her writings was about as authentic as Reagan's yarns—or liberals' selective reading of Bork's record. Bolick's snippets from Guinier's 1989 *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review* article make her seem like some sort of Black Panther. But her article mostly dwells upon the shoddy, dishonest enforcement of the Voting Rights Act by the Civil Rights Division under Reagan, where Bolick worked during 1986 and 1987. Guinier did suggest judicial-appointment quotas—specifically, that "the Judiciary committee should begin evaluating federal judicial nominations with reference to specific goals for increasing non-white nominees." But as for electoral politics, her voting-rights discussion emphasizes the need to *avoid* "legislative set-asides, color coded ballots, electoral quotas, or 'one black, two votes' remedies which some might argue are also justified."

The *Journal*'s errors and clumsy philosophical pirouettes made it a reliable source of unintended comedy this year, until Vincent Foster had to go and ruin it for everybody. What's odd about June 17's "Who Is Vincent Foster?" in light of subsequent events is that it is *not* particularly vicious or unbridled. It's a silly display of huffing and puffing, more worthy of a found-on-the-floor college newspaper than a leading national daily.

The piece is not even about Foster, but about the Clinton White House's purported "carelessness about following the law." What law, you ask? Why, the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). Not that the *Journal* had ever gone to bat for FACA in the past; indeed, the page regularly blasts similar laws as niggling congressional intrusions. Nevertheless, FACA had one thing going for it: A federal judge was threatening to use it to pry open Hillary Clinton's health-care task force. In high dudgeon, the *Journal* tsk-tsked the White House for a "certain lack of seriousness—contempt in its most basic meaning—toward legal rulings."

Foster doesn't appear until almost halfway through the piece, and only then because the anonymous writer drags him in. "We have a similar problem with Vincent Foster," he or she wrote. "Having made Webster Hubbell famous, it occured to us that we might have occasion to repeat the favor for other Rose partners, and requested photographs of Mr. Foster and associate White House counsel William Kennedy."

Their "problem" with Foster, in other words, was simply that he wouldn't cough up a photo for a hatchet job. So the *Journal* requested Foster's picture under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)—another burdensome bit of congressional activism. "The act requires officials to respond within 10 business days," the *Journal* primly noted, but believe it or not, a month later the White House still hadn't answered.

Lani Guinier

What were they trying to hide? And why was Vince Foster debauching those handmaidens of democracy, FOIA and FACA? The *Journal* rode to the rescue. . .by harassing White House staffers about Foster's picture. The rest of the piece recounted the editorial page's negotiations with administration officials, unwittingly illustrating its many Reagan-era complaints about harassment of government officials by the press. Although the White House ultimately faxed Foster's photo the night before the editorial was published, the piece was illustrated by a silhouette with a question mark inside.

The editors later claimed that they hadn't checked the fax machine.

Having caught the Clintonites in three minor legal slips, one of which it engineered by filing a ridiculous FOIA request, the *Journal* apparently felt it had ascended to the moral mountaintop.

But the editorial, in historical context, was pure sophism. The *Journal* spent most of the last decade arguing, much more eloquently, for

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greater executive privilege—and against such laws as FACA and FOIA. Foster was performing the same function for which the *Journal* lionized Oliver North during the Iran-Contra hearings of 1987: defending his president's penumbra of authority. And the page's reaction to Foster's suicide was equally hypocritical. It called for an investigation of the death by a special counsel within Justice, a close cousin to the independent counsels it once raged against and abhorred.

"Who is Vincent Foster?" was the culmination of a long string of hit jobs on the *Journal*'s perceived ideological foes, dating back even before its infamous 1982 attack on Raymond Bonner. As a *New York Times* reporter, Bonner was led by guerillas to the site of an apparent massacre at El Mozote, El Salvador, that had been committed by U.S.-trained Salvadoran troops. As soon as Bonner's story appeared, the *Journal* struck back with a two-column piece, titled "The Media's War," that accused Bonner—along with nearly every other American foreign correspondent since John Reed—of parroting leftist propaganda. It also insinuated that no "massacre" had taken place, and that Bonner had been duped by the Commies.

From their Liberty Street cloister, one wonders, how could the *Journal*'s editors have known one way or the other? Anyway, they were wrong. This spring, an independent investigation confirmed that the El Mozote massacre had taken place, as Bonner and Alma Guillermoprieto of the *Washington Post* reported, and as the *Journal*—echoing its Reagan State Department sources—had denied. (Parroting the U.S. Embassy, it must be said, is a much deeper tradition among foreign correspondents than leftist propagandizing is.) Once again, as in the case of Bill Ellen, one of the nation's best-selling newspapers—1.8 million readers a day—had been snookered by a source.

The *Journal* page uses the same facts-be-damned approach when it comes to political scandal. The basic rule of thumb is simple: defend Republicans, attack Democrats. So it leapt to the defense of Alabama Governor Guy Hunt, under investigation in 1991 for a slew of ethical irregularities—including his rather colorful practice of flying around the South in a state plane collecting monetary "love offerings" at Primitive Baptist revivals. "To remove a sitting governor because he accepted a few hundred dollars on occasion to promote spiritual values strikes us as absurd," harrumphed the *Journal*. Last May, a jury convicted the good guv'nah of the decidedly nonspiritual crime of converting campaign funds to personal use—such as buying himself a $4,000 riding mower. He was immediately removed from office.

The *Journal* greeted the news with silence. Meanwhile, it ignored a clear case of prosecutorial overreaching in Alabama: the years-long "investigation" of Birmingham Mayor Richard Arrington, a black Democrat, in which the Republican U.S. Attorney failed to unearth a single indictable deed but managed to set back Birmingham race relations 20 years. Normally vigilant against prosecutorial abuse when the target is a white Republican or business figure, the *Journal* said nothing.

Contrast that silence with the rancor inspired by Democratic Senator Dale Bumpers, who, the *Journal* charged, was wasting our money: "The U.S. Senate has brazenly voted to have its taxpayer-funded legal counsel represent Sen. Dale Bumpers in a suit to overturn Arkansas' term limit." That wasn't quite true. Bumpers didn't file the case, but was named as a defendant along with several other Arkansas elected officials. The Senate Counsel merely dispatched a two-page reply to the court stating that Bumpers had no interest in the outcome of the case. Cost to taxpayer: one first-class postage stamp. The writer could have checked out the story with a single phone call.

The punchline to all this is found in a November 1992 editorial about the collapse of the October Surprise theory in which the *Journal* writers piously, and without a hint of irony, warned their colleagues in the press to "be skeptical of convenient partisan accusations."

Paper Cuts

The *Journal*ists no doubt have a lot more at stake in all these fights than other newspapers. Having softened the beaches for the supply-side revolution, Bartley and friends now find themselves defending their historical legacy. They staked their own credibility on the success or failure of Reaganism, and, well, the negative evidence is mounting.

The logical course, once it became clear that the revolution didn't work, would have been to blame

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the Democrats for screwing things up. After all, Reagan wasn't a dictator; Democrats had controlled the House for four times as long as he occupied the White House. Instead, Bartley and his colleagues undertook to defend the entire mouldering edifice of Reaganism. They continue to insist, for example, that tax cuts do not impair the government's ability to raise revenue. Damage control seems to be the motive behind Bartley's latest book, *The Seven Fat Years*, in which he eloquently insists that things aren't as bad as they seem, and if they are, it's not Reagan's fault.

The problem is that the *Journal* and its contributors left themselves no wiggle room for when their political fortunes changed. Their shrill, sweeping attacks on special prosecutors did not admit the possibility that another administration that might deserve such investigations would ever hold power. Their all-out defense of mediocre nominees left them no credible way to attack someone else's mediocre nominees. Their rejection of the very idea of "elitist" art subsidies makes them look silly when a frequent outside contributor uses the page to special-plead for an elite literary magazine.

The *Journal* left itself no wiggle room for when its political fortunes changed. Its shrill attacks on special prosecutors did not admit that another administration might deserve them; its all-out defense of mediocre nominees left it no way to attack somebody else's mediocre nominees.

Many readers, even conservatives, are beginning to think that the *Journal*'s page is good for entertainment only. Even Jude Wanniski, Bartley's protege, thinks it's lost its relevance. "If I read another line-item veto editorial, or another term limits editorial. . . They've gotten to be hobby horses, and you can fill up space by writing those editorials again and again and again."

Many *Journal* reporters think of the editorial page as the North Korea of the Dow Jones world: dogmatic, bizarre, and blessedly isolated. But occasionally the relationship between the news and editorial side looks downright combative, particularly when reporters decimate editorial-page heroes. While Bartley's crew lionized Michael Milken as a financial superhero, for example, front-page editor James B. Stewart was proving beyond a reasonable doubt that Milken was a crook. The Clarence Thomas nomination also occasioned an intra-paper contretemps. In a *New Yorker* book review this year, *Journal* reporters Jill Abramson and Jane Mayer demolished, fact by fact, David Brock's *The Real Anita Hill*. Brock's evidence wasn't all new. Many of his central assertions—that Hill had been harassed by another employer, not Thomas; that she had been fired by a Washington law firm; and that her corroborating witnesses were either lying or not telling the whole truth—first saw print on the *Journal*'s editorial page.

"Once the sources are evaluated and the contradictory evidence is considered, Brock's arguments evaporate into an amorphous cloud of ill will," conclude Abramson and Mayer. Ditto, they might have added, for their own paper's editorials.

Given a choice of whom to trust in these fights, many readers seem to prefer the news side. According to one company source, the page's readership has declined from more than 60 percent of the paper's circulation to less than a third. On some level, that's a shame. For liberals, the *Journal* page is merely the object of horrified fascination. (What will those monsters dream up next?) But now more than ever, the world—especially the conservative world—could use an opposition forum that is both powerful and credible.

What we've got instead is a page that alternates between stupefying, dogmatic pronouncements and borderline paranoia leavened with factual sloppiness. The *Journal* editorialists would be ignored as a kind of F Troop in the war of ideas if their random, fumbling gun-play wounded less. It's ironic that the folks who brought us "No Guardrails" lack the basic sense of fairness that is required even of partisan scribes: respect for the truth, a willingness to see that every story has two sides, and the ability to admit that one is, on occasion, dead wrong. □

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Left Out

Harold Laski, the leftist British intellectual, knew Churchill, advised FDR, and dazzled Oliver Wendell Holmes. So why has posterity forgotten him?

BY ARTHUR SCHLESINGER, JR.

Harold Laski: A Life on the Left
Isaac Kramnick and Barry Sheerman, *Viking, $35*

Does anyone still remember Harold Laski? Sixty years ago he was a famous—in some circles notorious—figure. A professor of political science at the London School of Economics, he was known round the world as the evangelist of democratic socialism. In Britain, he regularly led the polls in the vote for the Labour Party's National Executive. In America, he was on close terms with Franklin Roosevelt and half a dozen Supreme Court justices. Leftists acclaimed him as the prophet of a golden tomorrow. Rightists denounced him as the evil genius behind the Labour Party and the New Deal. Anticolonial nationalists in Africa and India looked to him for inspiration. His books were in demand, his articles appeared everywhere, his lectures were enthusiastically applauded, his energy seemed boundless, his influence was indisputable. And today? Rarely has so vivid a figure faded so fast. He is as forgotten as Ozymandias: "Round the decay/Of that colossal wreck. . ./The lone level sands stretch far away."

Laski's impact, while it lasted, was almost as great on America as on Britain. He burst on the United States in 1916, a 23-year-old prodigy out of Oxford who joined the Harvard faculty and proceeded to dazzle everyone he met—and he took care to meet everyone of importance. Those dazzled (some longer than others) included, in the older generation, Justices Holmes and Brandeis, Herbert Croly of *The New Republic* and the philosopher Morris Cohen; among his contemporaries, Felix Frankfurter, Roger Baldwin, Walter Lippmann, Edmund Wilson, and Charles A. Beard. Anyone who doubts the youthful brilliance of this small, frail, chain-smoking Britisher should look at the two sparkling volumes of the *Holmes-Laski Letters*.

After a controversial intervention in the Boston police strike of 1919, Laski returned to England where, in addition to his LSE professorship, he lived a frantic life as a political and intellectual gadfly, pouring out books, pamphlets, and newspaper columns in an endless stream. He was active in the Labour Party, the Fabian Society, the Left Book Club and lectured regularly in America, where he picked up a new generation of friends, especially Max Lerner and Edward R. Murrow.

Even his critics concede that Laski played a very large role in bringing about the transformation of British opinion that produced Labour's victory in 1945. But ironically, Labour's arrival in 10 Downing Street doomed Laski to frustration and depression. For all his public visibility, he never had had much practical influence on policy when Labour was in opposition. Now his pronouncements increasingly irritated a Labour leadership in power. Prime Minister Attlee finally told him, "A period of silence on your part would be welcome." He lost a major libel suit. The Cold War baffled and dispirited him. After the Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia, he wrote Frankfurter, "I have a feeling that I am al-

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. is Albert Schweitzer Professor of the Humanities at the City University of New York and the winner of Pulitzer Prizes in biography and history.

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ready a ghost in a play that is over." His last years were forlorn. A broken man, he died in 1950 at the age of 57.

Nineteen ninety-three is Laski's centennial, and two biographies have appeared this year in Britain. Thus far, only this one has come out in the United States. Isaac Kramnick, an American political scientist known for his work on Edmund Burke and on civic republicanism, and Barry Sheerman, a Labour MP, have written a fair-minded and scrupulous book, sympathetic to Laski but not panegyric in tone nor inclined to overrate the subject.

Harold Laski, circa 1940.

I comment as one who saw Laski from time to time in the 1930s and 1940s. My father had met him through Frankfurter, and, when Laski visited Harvard, he would occasionally come to our house for dinner. I used to hear him lecture at Ford Hall Forum in Boston. He was a wonder on the podium—speaking in complex, elaborate, intricately balanced sentences that seemed out of control for a moment but always came out right in the end; it was like watching a trapeze artist complete the final leap.

Having enchanted the audience in his lecture, Laski would then open the floor to questions. These he too often disposed of in a condescending, sarcastic way that humiliated the questioners, usually earnest folk, and alienated the rest of us. Watching Laski thus lose his audience, I learned the utility of reformulating dumb questions so that they make some sort of sense and thereby preserving the self-respect of the questioner.

Laski's handling of questions was very likely a hangover from the British custom of putting down hecklers; for he was basically a kind and good man, especially generous to questing Asian, African, and American students. His heart went out to the young and obscure as well as to the old and famous. I observed this attending some of his Sunday afternoon teas when I was at Cambridge University in 1938-39 and later in London during the war. But I was never a favorite of his, and our relationship was somewhat prickly.

I last saw him when he came to Washington in the autumn of 1946. Jim Rowe, one of FDR's early special assistants, summoned a group of New Dealers to meet with Laski. He spoke about the breakdown in relations between the Soviet Union and the West. The blame, he suggested, rested with the United States. He was asked what he thought had been the point of no return. "It was," Laski replied with his usual confidence, "the speech Jimmy Byrnes gave at Stuttgart"—a speech in which the then-secretary of State announced American support for a democratic Germany. Someone spoke up from the back of the room; it was the familiar quavering voice of Benjamin V. Cohen, whom Laski greatly admired. "Harold," Ben Cohen said, "Harold, I'm sorry you feel that way, and I think you have it wrong. I should know—I wrote the Stuttgart speech." Laski looked stricken.

He is forgotten today because he left very little to remember. When young, he seemed destined to be a considerable political theorist. But, for all his erudition, he was neither an original nor a coherent nor a penetrating thinker, as Herbert Deane demonstrated 40 years ago in that notable work of demolition, *The Political Ideas of Harold J. Laski*. Laski had a Marxist conviction that salvation lay in a planned economy based on the public ownership of the means of production and that, since the capitalist class would not acquiesce in its own liquidation, the cooperative commonwealth was not likely to be attained without violence. But he also had a Holmesian commitment to civil liberties, free speech and association, and representative democracy. It was not easy to reconcile the two.

His Holmesian side immunized him against the Communist party *per se*. Communists, he said, "lie, they intrigue, they falsify, they distort, they indulge in vile personal abuse." He saw the Soviet Union as a police state—"a regime of deliberate and organized repression"—and the

Harvard Law School

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Hitler-Stalin pact as a monstrous betrayal. But his Marxist side persuaded him of the innate depravity of the profit system, and he dreamed of a democratic collectivism. Much of the time he could see no enemy to the left.

In his Marxist mood, he dismissed liberalism as no more than the self-serving ideology of the rising bourgeoisie. In his Holmesian mood, he cherished liberal ideals as autonomous and universal. "A socialist by allegiance," George Orwell called him, "and a liberal by temperament." He gave the highest value to individual freedom but never explained how it could survive without diversification of ownership. His fatal fluency enabled him to glide over the hard questions. His besetting sin was the substitution of rhetoric for thought.

The Kramnick-Sheerman book catalogues a number of unresolved contradictions. His political role was ambivalent: "He wanted both worlds: the insider's thrill of influencing events, and the outsider's capacity to criticize and dissent." He called for the overthrow of the ruling class, but he relished their company; "almost as important as attacking the privileged was dining with them." As an intellectual who loved politics, he failed because, as Attlee said, "he had no political judgement." Laski, Kramnick and Sheerman continue, was

> fiercely egalitarian yet an intellectual prone to elitism and cultural snobbery. He loved America and fiercely criticized it. He saw Soviet Russia as the harbinger of a new civilization, and its crimes broke his heart. He was selfless and generous to a fault and an indefatigable self-promoter. He was an erudite scholar and a mass circulation publicizer.

And then there was Laski's mythomania. He was an incorrigible teller of tales that exaggerated—sometimes fabricated—his own accomplishments, charms, and triumphs. He would write to Holmes that he had recently spent a day with the German medievalist von Below; in a deadpan footnote, Mark Howe, the editor of the Holmes-Laski letters, observed that von Below had died three years before. He would even tell of playing and beating the American tennis star Maurice McLoughlin.

Oddly, some stories that seemed mythological were evidently true. One listened with skepticism to his claim that Churchill used to dandle him on his knee when Harold was a boy. In fact, Laski's father was instrumental in Churchill's winning a parliamentary seat in Manchester in 1904, and Churchill was often in the Laski house. I can remember Laski during the war telling how his hotel was bombed one night as he slept and his bed fell through three floors. Kramnick and Sheerman accept the story as true, but I still can't believe it. Nor can one swallow his claims of intimacy with world figures from Woodrow Wilson to Joseph Stalin.

What somewhat extenuates Laski's inventions, however, is that they lacked malice and were mostly self-puffery. As Rebecca West said, "He exaggerates about 50 percent, but only in areas where it does no harm." The trouble perhaps is that he never grew up; he was the precocious youngster to the end, always seeking ways to call attention to himself. As his devoted wife Frida put it, he was "half-man, half-child, all his life."

His great triumph was as a teacher. The London School of Economics, where Laski "moulded the minds of so many future leaders" of the Third World, Pat Moynihan once said, was "the most important institution of higher education in Asia and Africa." "The center of Nehru's thinking," said John Kenneth Galbraith, "was Laski" and "India the country most influenced by Laski's ideas." He was, in the words of Kramnick and Sheerman, "a mass preacher and public teacher" swaying wide audiences. But teaching and preaching, for all their multiplier effect, are ephemeral accomplishments. Once the music stops and the man departs, the lone and level sands stretch far away.

This able and judicious book has been ill-served by the publisher. The great justice is repeatedly rendered "Benjamin Cardoza"; the names of Charles A. Lindbergh, Fiorello LaGuardia, Jane Addams, Samuel Eliot Morison, Zechariah Chafee, Clifton Daniel, George Sokolsky, W. H. Chamberlin, and Corliss Lamont are also misspelled. And there are factual errors: The father of Dorothy Straight was not a robber baron; Thomas Nixon Carver was an economist, not a political scientist; Graham Wallas wrote about Francis Place, not William; C. L. Sulzberger was never the publisher of *The New York Times*; etc., etc. What has happened to editors in this decadent age? □

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The Lonely Star Candidate

In John Connally's interesting, score-settling autobiography, the former governor says he didn't yearn for more power. But there's thwarted ambition on every page

BY JOHN SHELTON REED

In History's Shadow: An American Odssey
John Connally with Mickey Herskowitz
Hyperion, $24.95

John Connally died last June 15 from pneumonia, complicated by a lung condition believed to be related to the wound he received from Lee Harvey Oswald. His 76 years in many ways recapitulated the history of the South in this century: from humble agrarian origins, early New Deal loyalties and military valor, to political and economic success (with an occasional whiff of corruption), finally switching political allegiance to an ambivalent Republican party, but always with the nagging sense that he never got his just deserts from the Eastern Establishment.

Like most Southerners of his generation, Connally was not born to prosperity. His father was successively a tenant farmer, a bricklayer, a barber, a butcher, and finally a bus owner/driver and local politician. The young Connally wore kneepads cut from old tires to pick cotton. (Later he did not talk much about these inelegant origins—not that he was ashamed of them, he says.) At 16, he went off to the state university, where he was active in a drama club that during the 1930s produced Eli Wallach, Zachary Scott, Allen Ludden, and the television actress Betty White. (Walter Cronkite was on the publicity committee.) In Austin he was elected president of the student assembly and made friends that lasted him for life: future businessmen, politicians, and political lawyers, among them Robert Strauss and Congressman Jake Pickle. He acquired a law degree and got his first taste of statewide politics working for a business-backed gubernatorial candidate who lost to the inimitable W. Lee ("Pass the biscuits, Pappy") O'Daniel of the musical Light Crust Doughboys. Fatefully, he came to the notice of an ambitious young New Dealer named Lyndon Johnson, whom he served as factotum and advisor off and on for the next 30 years.

After Navy service in World War II—which gave him a Bronze Star, the Legion of Merit, and a taste for the recordings of Enrico Caruso—his fortunes rose with those of his patron and his state. As he moved back and forth between Washington and Texas, from government to business and back again, his talents and connections made

John Shelton Reed is Kenan Professor of Sociology and acting director of the Center for the Study of the American South at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His latest book is Surveying the South: Studies in Regional Sociology *(University of Missouri Press).*

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him a wealthy man by non-Texas standards, a prominent figure in the conservative wing of the Texas Democratic party, and eventually a popular and successful three-term governor, elected to his last term with 72 percent of the vote.

When Johnson became president, he often sought Connally's advice—according to Connally—but he didn't always take it. Connally says that he disagreed with his mentor about three things: He wanted to threaten Hanoi with nuclear attack, he disapproved of the volume and speed (but not the aims) of Johnson's social legislation, and he thought Johnson suffered a "failure of nerve" in not replacing John Kennedy's cabinet—including Robert Kennedy—with his own men.

After 1968, the McGovernite handwriting was on the wall for conservative Democrats, and Connally, like many other Southerners, changed first his vote and then his party. Approached by Billy Graham (of all people) about Gergenizing the Nixon cabinet as secretary of Defense or of the Treasury, Connally took Treasury. "State has the glamour, Defense has the toys, but Treasury is and always has been the most powerful job in the cabinet," he observes. He says he was always "a conservative who believed in an active government," and he certainly backed a good many statist measures as secretary of the Treasury, notably a 10 percent import "surcharge" to "correct unfair trade balances," the Lockheed loan guarantee, and Nixon's wage and price controls. (This last is one of the two things in his career Connally regards as mistakes, the other being the real estate investments that bankrupted him in 1987.) He left Treasury, just in time to avoid Watergate, over a dispute about his prerogatives as secretary (an undersecretary was reporting directly to the White House staff).

After that the story is all anticlimax: a trial and acquittal on bribery charges; a humiliating, unsuccessful run for president; a Republican White House that seemed happy to leave him practicing law in Texas; and personal bankruptcy. Of course, Alexander Hamilton's career topped out at secretary of the Treasury, too, but Connally was no Alexander Hamilton nor, apparently, did he ever aspire to be.

Patricia Raine

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He says things like, "I never planned or sought, or wanted a long career in politics," or "I never felt afflicted with Potomac fever," or "I could have spent my whole life happily as a pretty fair cattleman, or even as a corporate lawyer." But he was obviously consumed by what-ifs. He believed he could have had the Democratic nomination for president in 1968, if Kennedy hadn't been shot. Nixon would have delivered him the Republican nomination in 1976, if it hadn't been for Watergate. And then there was his actual, if short-lived, presidential campaign in 1980. Clearly this was a man who very much wanted the brass ring of American politics, and it plainly grieved him that bad luck and other people's blunders and malice kept him from getting it.

This book's last chapters are largely about those blunders and that malice. But what's an autobiography for if not to settle old scores and give your side of ancient disputes? Connally was a good hater, and he is charmingly forthright in his self-service. His book is full of innuendo, hints of plots, and implied skullduggery on the part of everyone from the young man who eloped with his daughter (who subsequently killed herself) to every politician who ever crossed him, of whom there were many. As for giving the author's side of things—well, Connally does have a lot of explaining to do.

Start with the 1948 Senate election that gave LBJ the nickname (which he hated) "Landslide Lyndon." According to Connally, who was Johnson's campaign manager, "There has been so much pure drivel written about the Senate election of '48 that it has driven out the impure drivel." Connally says that he was determined to avoid a repeat of 1941, when Johnson had a Senate seat stolen from him by a group of operators that included Coke Stevenson, his 1948 opponent. So Johnson's workers were told to report low vote totals initially so the other side would underestimate how many votes they had to steal to win.

The Last Ride

This is then-Texas Governor John Connally's recollection of the motorcade that was to take him, his wife Nellie, and President and Mrs. Kennedy from a wildly enthusiastic reception at Dallas' Love Field to a luncheon at the city's Trade Mart on November 22, 1963.

We saw only one negative sign. I believe it said, simply, "KENNEDY, GO HOME." He nudged my shoulder and motioned with his thumb. "See that sign, John?" I said that I had, and hoped he had not. He smiled and said, "I see them everywhere I go." With an edge of sarcasm, he added, "He's probably a nice guy."

At a point where the crowds and the noise slackened momentarily, he asked how I thought things were looking in Texas. He had been pumped up by the reception and his political interest was quickening.

"There will be a Houston *Chronicle* poll out tomorrow," I said, "which should give us some ideas."

"What is it going to show?" he asked.

"I think it will show that you carry the state, but that it will be a close election."

"Oh? How will it show you running?"

"Mr. President," I said, "I think it will show me running a little ahead of you."

"That doesn't surprise me," he said, and those were the last words we exchanged. By now, Mrs. Kennedy had managed to slip on her sunglasses; when the President noticed, he said, in a low voice, "Take off your glasses, Jackie." She had not campaigned with him since 1960, and was making her second appearance in public since the death of their infant son, Patrick, in August. She may not have realized it, but you might as well put on a mask as dark sunglasses, which have the same effect of hiding one's face and emotions and making it useless to take part in a parade like this one. Several minutes later, in perhaps a forgetful moment, she had slipped them back on, and I heard him say in exactly the same tone: "Take off the glasses, Jackie."

He was watching the crowd, waving at them steadily with a stiff forearm, his right hand moving

From In History's Shadow, *by John Connally with Mickey Herskowitz. To be published by Hyperion in November. Copyright 1993 by John Connally with Mickey Herskowitz.*

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Then, when Johnson's totals mysteriously increased, see, it just *looked* as if new votes were being generated. It was really just that the actual totals were being reported for the first time. "There may have been invalid votes that were cast for Lyndon Johnson," Connally allows. "But they were not bought and they were not stolen."

Or consider the 1955 bill to end natural gas price controls that was derailed when Senator Case of South Dakota rose to report on the Senate floor that he had been given an envelope full of hundred dollar bills by a lobbyist. "My personal conviction," says Connally, "was that no attempt had been made to bribe anyone. A contribution that would have been given routinely was handled clumsily, with atrocious timing."

And of course there's the Kennedy assassination. Connally reports that the Kennedy visit was forced on him by the president, who wanted to meet and mend fences with big-money Texans. Ticket sales for the fundraisers were weak, Connally says, until he worked the phones for two nights and personally sold $50,000 worth (a lot of money in those days). He tried to talk the president out of having a motorcade, but the president's advance men insisted on it. They're the ones who released the route to the press, too. Connally even repeats Marina Oswald's speculation that Oswald was actually gunning for him, not the president; he is convinced, he says, that at the very least Oswald wanted to kill them both. His account of the assassination makes you want to refurbish the old joke to make the punchline read: "Who's the man with Governor Connally?" (Other than believing that a separate bullet was intended for him, however, Connally accepted the Warren Commission report. He quotes Earl Warren: "What possible set of circumstances could get me and Dick Russell to conspire on *anything*?")

The longest explanation—it gets a full chapter—has to do with Connally's indictment and trial in the 1974 Milk Fund scandal. Jake

"You can't say now that Dallas doesn't love you, Mr. President."

only a few inches out from his face and back. It was a small movement and struck me as curiously formal, but I could see it was effective. I kept hearing a rumble behind me—I was on the right side of the jump seat, in front of the President, and Nellie on the left side, in front of Jackie. It sounded like a low monotone, and then I realized he was responding to the crowd, "Thank you, thank you, thank you." Over and over, he repeated himself to people who could not possibly hear him, but who could sense that he was answering them, and who knew that a contact had been made.

And then he turned his head slightly and said, "Jackie, take off your gloves."

The crowds were going wild, swelling larger and larger. We passed a school and the children poured into the street, so excited they were shaking my hand, too. As we neared the center of town, people were packing the sidewalks clear back to the buildings. They were hanging out of the windows ten stories up, waving banners and signs. They were smiling, laughing, pointing, waving, shrieking. Some of the schools had let out early and the girls were jumping in front of the limousine, creating pandemonium for the Secret Service agents. It was an incredible show, directed as much at Mrs. Kennedy as the President. I had the distinct feeling she was unbending, relaxing, learning to accept and enjoy this outpouring of affection.

. . . I felt exuberant. The people on the street were his. The business community, whose help he would need in 1964, had found him sincere and unthreatening. He would charm more of them at the luncheon—for which we were already late—and at the dinner that night in Austin. The President looked hearty and confident. Nellie leaned sideways between the jump seats and said proudly, over the roar of the crowd: "You can't say now that Dallas doesn't love you, Mr. President."

He smiled and nodded. At that instant, the big dark blue car turned off Main Street and slowly negotiated the turn under the looming School Book Depository building, and dipped down the hill in the bright sunshine.

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Jacobsen, an Austin lawyer and lobbyist for the milk producers, a man with "the personality of an eel, but a friendly eel," plea-bargained his way out of a prison term by agreeing to testify that he had delivered $10,000 to Connally in 1971 for advising President Nixon to raise milk price supports. Then and later, Connally denied the charge indignantly: "I would not have condoned for one minute anything of questionable character, much less anything illegal." While he denies that he could be bought, he also adduces what could be called the Rostenkowski defense: It's ridiculous to think that he could be bought for a lousy ten grand. Connally claims his prosecution was politically inspired, and among the conspirators he names Jim Wright and Watergate special prosecutor Leon Jaworski (who worked for a rival Houston law firm), as well as Dick Cheney and most of Gerald Ford's cabinet, who wanted to keep him off the 1976 Republican ticket. At the trial, Connally's character witnesses included Robert McNamara, Dean Rusk, Barbara Jordan, Lady Bird Johnson, and the ubiquitous Billy Graham. In the end, he was acquitted, but the episode haunted his political career thereafter.

But there was more to Connally's stalled career than the incompetence and conniving of others. The political skills he picked up from mentors like Sam Rayburn and Lyndon Johnson served him well in the intrigues of state government, and they made him an effective power broker, advisor, and confidant to presidents. But the style that served him so well in Texas was like a rare wine that doesn't travel well. Elsewhere, this can-do wheeler-dealer came across as something like J.R. Ewing of "Dallas," a Huey Long in tailored suits, a suaver version of Lyndon Johnson. And it wasn't just the Eastern Establishment that didn't cotton to the Connally style. In the 1980 South Carolina Republican primary, Ronald Reagan cleaned his clock: A $12 million campaign netted Connally exactly one delegate to the Republican National Convention.

But Connally had the virtues as well as the defects of his type. Reagan's election left him free to pursue a short, disastrous career in Texas real estate development, and his ensuing bankruptcy showed him at his best. Although he claims that "the failure of the loan was not the result of mismanagement but of circumstances in the general economy" and argues that the government should have intervened to tide embarrassed real estate investors over (it did it for Lockheed, after all), when his fortunes finally collapsed he took it like a man. He and his wife could have sold their belongings privately, to a dealer, but they decided that a public auction, however painful, would bring a higher price and let him do better by his creditors. And the Connallys were there, at the sale, to explain to buyers the history and provenance of their art and other effects. The scene is actually moving, lessened only slightly by the fact that Connally knew that it was.

A first person account like this is probably not the best way to get the flavor of the politics Connally practiced. The tendency to straighten one's tie and pose for posterity seems to be irresistible. Still, Connally tells some nice stories. Some of the best are about his big-oil friends. When oil millionaire Sid Richardson (Connally's sometime employer) bought the New York Central railroad, for instance, he discovered that his part of the price was $5 million more than he had thought. His only question was, "What was the name of that railroad again?" Another oil man, Oscar Wyatt, went with Connally on a mission to Baghdad just before the Gulf War—unapproved and in fact discouraged by the Bush administration—to meet with Saddam Hussein and bring out some of the American hostages. Like Wyatt, Connally opposed the war, partly because he saw it as a gimmick to restore Bush's popularity, partly because (as Wyatt put it), "In 19 years of trading with the Arabs, the one and only thing I've learned is to stay out of their chickenshit conflicts."

Not surprisingly, many of Connally's best stories are about Lyndon Johnson. For example, Johnson was given to calling people at 5:30 a.m. and asking, "What are you doing?"—to which Rep. Wayne Hays once replied, "Well, Mr. President, I've been lying here hoping you would call." Connally shared Bill Moyers' admiration for LBJ's "moral imagination" and he seems to have been gen-

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uinely fond of the man, but he had few illusions about Johnson's devious intelligence and bulldozer tactics. He applauds the few—among them, Sheldon Cohen of the Internal Revenue Service and Joe Barr, undersecretary of the Treasury—who stood up to Johnson successfully.

Two of the stories in this book are about the unlikely subject of Russian women. One concerns Lyndon Johnson's first meeting with Franklin Roosevelt. The young congressman went to the White House to seek a favor for his district. After listening patiently for a few minutes, Roosevelt asked him, out of the blue, "Did you ever see a Russian woman naked?" It seems that Harry Hopkins had visited the USSR and brought back the intelligence that heavy labor had made the New Soviet Woman differently constructed from the American model, information FDR apparently found intriguing.

It's possible that Hopkins didn't meet a representative sample. Forty years later, Richard Nixon told Connally about the parade of Aeroflot stewardesses to the bedroom of the visiting Leonid Brezhnev. According to the president, those Russian women were quite fetching.

Connally's book concludes with a hodgepodge of policy recommendations—national service, a value added tax, term limits, a $10-a-barrel tax on imported oil, federal standards for public school curricula, and (this one piquant, given the source) the restriction or elimination of plea-bargaining—that, if nothing else, suggest why neither major party was ever really comfortable with this it's-broke-let's-fix-it Texan.

Sound familiar?

Let me refresh your memory. Picture John Connally, not as a bitter has-been offering advice no one wants, but in his prime, in 1972, a 53-year-old mover and shaker bringing President Nixon to his ranch to eat barbecue and corn on the cob with other movers and shakers of Texas. Here he is, tall and handsome, laughing and shaking hands, the gracious host. Here's Alan Shivers, a former governor, and Miss Ima Hogg, daughter of another. There's Anne Armstrong, over yonder Bunker Hunt, Perry Bass, the Murchison brothers. . . and an interesting young newcomer named H. Ross Perot. □

Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation
(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685) 1. A. Title of publication: The Washington Monthly. B. Publication number: 704640. 2. Date of filing: October 1, 1993. 3. Frequency of issue: monthly except combined January/February and July/August. 3. A. Number of issues published annually: 10. B. Annual subscription price: $38.00. 4. Complete mailing address of known office of publication: 1611 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20009. 5. Complete mailing address of the headquarters of general business offices of the publisher: same. 6. Names and complete addresses of publisher, editor, and managing editor: Publisher, Mary Beiro, 1611 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20009; Editor, Charles Peters, 1611 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20009; Managing Editor, vacant. 7. Owner: The Washington Monthly Co., an unincorporated joint venture between The Washington Monthly Corporation and The Washington Monthly Limited Partnership, of which The Washington Monthly Publishing Corporation is sole general partner. All entities at 1611 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20009. Owners of 1 percent or more of shares of The Washington Monthly Limited Partnership: Preston Brown, Washington, DC; Warren Buffett, Omaha, NE; The Elizabeth E. Chilton Marital Trust, Charleston, WV; Joseph Cole, Lyndhurst, OH; Alexander Ewing, Millbrook, NY; James Fallows, Washington, DC; Nancy M. Folger, Washington, DC; Gene Gordon, Bethesda, MD; Robert Hellawell, Demarest, NJ; Edgar Kaiser Jr., Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; Phil Keisling, Portland, OR; Roger S. Kuhn, Bethesda, MD; Morton Mandel, Cleveland, OH; Matthew Nemerson, New Haven, CT; New Haven Terminal, New Haven, CT; Richard L. Ottinger, Washington, DC; Ann Peretz, Cambridge, MA; Tom Peters, Palo Alto, CA; Julien Phillips, San Mateo, CA; Joseph Rosenfield, Des Moines, IA; Estate of Sidney B. Sachs, Washington, DC; William Schulz, Phoenix, AZ; Fred Stanback Jr., Salisbury, NC; Estate of Philip M. Stern, Washington, DC; Estate of Stuart W. Thayer, New York, NY; Howard W. Young, Washington, DC. Owners of 1 percent or more of stock of The Washington Monthly Corporation: Estate of Timothy J. Adams, Washington, DC; Russell Baker, Leesburg, VA; Taylor Branch, Baltimore, MD; A. Whitney Ellsworth, New York, NY; Joseph Freitas Jr., San Francisco, CA; Murray Kempton, New York, NY; Suzannah Lessard, New York, NY; Estate of Peter Lisagor, Arlington, VA; Charles Peters, Washington, DC; PKL Co. Inc., New York, NY; John Rothchild, Miami, FL; Eleanor Rovere, Tarrytown, NY; Hugh Sidey, Potomac, MD; Carole Lee Smith, Salem, OR; James C. Thomson Jr., Cambridge, MA; Estate of Carol Trueblood, Washington, DC. Owners of 1 percent or more of stock in The Washington Monthly Publishing Corporation: Joseph D. Crowley, New Haven, CT; Kanawha Banking and Trust, Trustee of John D. Rockefeller IV, Charleston, WV; Fiona Beck, Washington, DC; John Spencer, Middlebury, VT; Estate of Carol Trueblood, Washington, DC. 8. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities: Marline Resources Company, 645 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10022. 9. Not applicable. 10. Extent and nature of circulation: (average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months) actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date. A. Total number of copies printed: (31,100) 35,000. B. Paid circulation: 1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, and counter sales: (3,789) 7,174. 2. Mail subscription: (19,855) 23,891. C. Total paid and/or requested circulation: (23,644) 31,065. D. Free distribution by mail, carrier or other means; samples, complimentary, and other free copies: (1,383) 1,557. E. Total distribution: (25,027) 32,622. F. Copies not distributed: 1. Office use, left over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing: (2,858) 2,378. 2. Return from news agents: (3,215) 0. G. Total: (31,100) 35,000. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.
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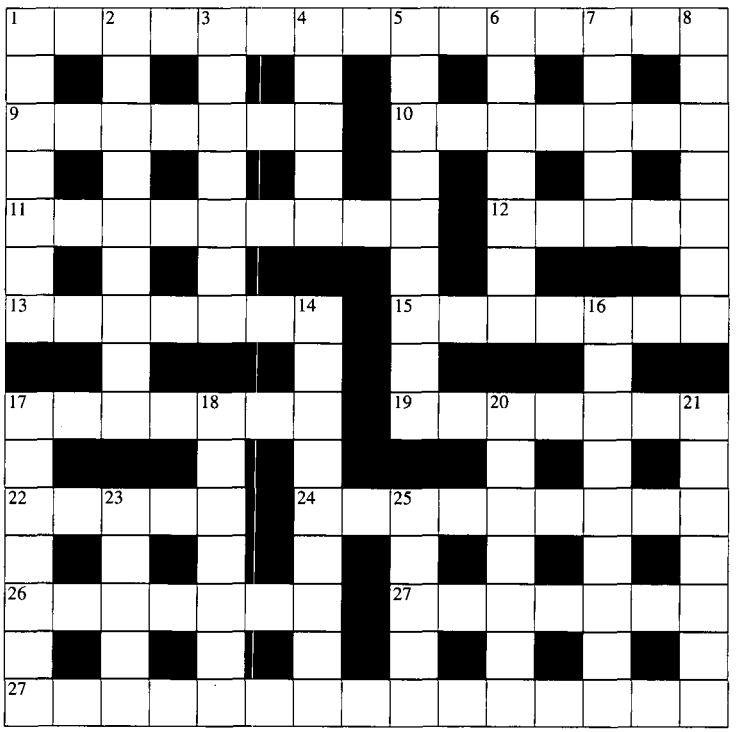
Political Puzzle

BY JOHN BARCLAY

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g. (2,3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g. USA, are treated as one word.



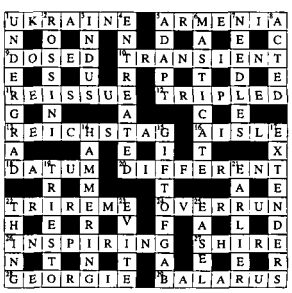
Across

1. Zoo titan, his pail upset, is expensive problem. (15)
9. Reels wildly about the queen and avid witness. (7)
10. Locale for bizarre tinges surrounding Far West. (7)
11. Greek loiters at assembly. (9)
12. Clean up degree article. (5)
13. Leader peculiarly in style. (7)
15. Teachers at times reroute streets. (7)
17. New spy Smart is sensitive to the supernatural. (7)
19. Pay heed to the damaged scepter. (7)
22. Florida athlete to rag unmercifully. (5)
24. Start to make it a region. (9)
26. Physicians swallow tossed rice for us. (7)
27. Trim pin carefully to make a mark. (7)
28. Slyly hail nun's teacher for 1 Down's current subject. (6,9)

Down

1. Moving rally follows greeting for Washington figure. (7)
2. Clay piles overturned with particular objective. (9)
3. Envisions sea tide swirling. (7)
4. Something of value like part of a tennis match. (5)
5. Cotter pins assembled missing end point for officer. (9)
6. Possibly best in a Mediterranean resort. (7)
7. Do it wrong following one foolish person. (5)
8. Crazy about rising egg and valuable little pieces. (7)
14. Former Russian leader oils chain erratically. (8,1)
16. Aline vote differently for architectural aspect. (9)
17. Boxer clean after conference. (7)
18. Musician playing his part. (7)
20. Boss who neglects detail? (7)
21. Compose letters for highway construction. . . (7)
23. . . . with new letter at the construction. (5)
25. Contest is around certain colleges. (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle:



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Political Booknotes

President Kennedy: Profile of Power
Richard Reeves
Simon & Schuster, $27.50
By Charles Peters

This is the best book yet about the Kennedy administration. It is more useful than its most distinguished rivals, Theodore Sorensen's *Kennedy* and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.'s *A Thousand Days*, because it is balanced with a much fuller exploration of the administration's negatives. And Reeves, not having been a presidential speechwriter as Sorensen and Schlesinger were, is not subject to the temptation to present speeches he wrote as examples of presidential thought at its most profound.

Reeves tells the whole story, meaning that to the best of my knowledge he includes all the significant facts. His account is also mercifully short of pontification. There are none of the long boring stretches that remind you of love scenes you saw in movies when you were a kid that made you squirm in your seat or run to the popcorn stand. Occasionally, this is frustrating when you want to know more about what Reeves thinks is the meaning of an event. On the other hand, it may be just as well that he didn't do more of this sort of thing, because he tends to fall into error on the few occasions when he does attempt to explain.

Thus when he disagrees with the view held by both Sorensen and Schlesinger that JFK grew dramatically during his presidency, he's dead wrong. If Kennedy hadn't grown between the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban Missile Crisis, we wouldn't be here now.

Reeves says Kennedy would have been better off using the Eisenhower decision-making system, which rightly required all the national security officials to be consulted, but wrongly excluded anyone outside that loop. So if JFK had attended to this bureaucratic nicety during the Missile Crisis, for example, Robert Kennedy would not have been there to oppose the bombing of Cuba that was advocated by many of the most influential participants. A president does have to be careful to consult all the obvious Joint Chiefs of Staff-types when he makes a military decision, as Eisenhower correctly criticized Kennedy for failing to do when Kennedy cancelled air strikes during the Bay of Pigs invasion. But he also must make bureaucratic end runs, as FDR did so skillfully, to consult with mid-level dissenting staffers and outsiders whose good sense he values.

Reeves also contends that there wasn't a shred of idealism in John Kennedy. I think it's more accurate to say that Kennedy had an aversion to wearing idealism on his sleeve. As he was growing up, that would have earned the scorn of both his father and his elder brother Joe. But John was not his father or his older brother. He was much more sensitive than either of them, and the actions of his presidency show a devotion to peace, to avoiding wars that could kill thousands, and, even though he liked to say "Life is unfair," I think he had a deep belief in fair play. In race relations, for instance, though trying to be the tough political realist that his father could have admired, he nevertheless usually chose to do the right thing in the clutch. Had he lived, my guess is that he would have been like his brother Robert, gradually less embarrassed by his idealism and more understanding of how the public needed to see that side of him.

Chained Together: Mandela, de Klerk, and the Struggle to Remake South Africa
David Ottaway
Times Books, $24.50
By Ryan Walsh

Almost four years ago, Nelson Mandela stepped through the gates of Victor Vorster Prison for the first time in 30 years. It was the grand finale of an incredible turn of events which started with President F.W. de Klerk's announcement on February 2, 1990 that the time had come to include blacks in the government of South Africa. Much like the recent Israeli-PLO accords, the notion of two old enemies agreeing to negotiate an end to one of the world's longest-running conflicts shocked the world.

But now in 1993, Mandela and de Klerk—the Nobel Peace Prize notwithstanding—are still far from reaching a settlement. Instead of initiating a period of peace in South Africa, the negotiations have plunged the country into the bloodiest period of political violence in its troubled history.

David Ottaway, a foreign correspondent for *The Washington Post*, arrived in South Africa in 1989, just before de Klerk's historic speech. His latest book is a fascinating first-hand account of the initial euphoria over Mandela's release and the subsequent frustration of trying to turn a symbolic agreement into a concrete political settlement. It's a process that could no doubt be repeated in the Middle East, and the lesson of South Africa is that the nitty gritty details of implementation are just as important as the emotional moments of breakthrough.

During his four years in South Africa, Ottaway saw much to make him pessimistic. Mandela's African National Congress, an umbrella organization much like the PLO, contains several smaller groups, all of which are

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vying for power. It is also struggling to transform itself from a guerilla movement into a political party. De Klerk did not help matters by shifting his position on several issues during the negotiations. Ottaway calls him "the consummate politician," and the president's tendency to waver soured Mandela on de Klerk and his National Party (NP).

As if the ANC-NP relations were not strained enough, radicals on both sides have tried to derail the talks altogether. From the Pan-African Congress on the left to the Afrikaner Resistance Movement on the right, these groups have increased the tension through political demonstrations and terrorism. Nathan Buthelezi's Inkatha party, in its battles with the ANC for supremacy in the townships, has fostered the worst of the violence.

But while these factors have certainly hindered the negotiations, the root of the problem probably lies within the true goals of the NP. Ottaway suggests that whites may not be willing to surrender their power after all. He points out that some NP leaders believe that they, with their established strength in campaigning, can actually win an open election in South Africa.

Much more plausible is that de Klerk never intended to surrender at all. Evidence of this can be found in that February 1990 landmark speech. "Without contact and cooperation with the outside world," he said, "we cannot promote the well-being and security of our citizens." This "cooperation" could only come with the lifting of the international trade sanctions, and the reforms he announced were similar to those demanded by the West. You get the sense that the NP repealed apartheid not because it was oppressive or immoral but because the country, feeling the crunch of spiralling security costs and hard-hitting sanctions, could no longer afford it.

White South Africans have been forced into "reforms" in the past. In 1983, the government led by P.W. Botha faced similar international and domestic pressure and decided to include other segments of the population in the government. The constitution was cleverly rewritten, establishing a tricameral legislature with a house for whites, coloureds, and Indians (the first was sufficiently powerful to defeat any legislation supported by the other two). Unfortunately, this "reform" still left over 70 percent of the population (namely blacks) without political representation.

By 1990, this token effort had neither lifted the sanctions nor decreased the political turmoil. Although rewriting the constitution to include blacks was risky for the white population, de Klerk admitted the country had "no alternative." But since negotiations began, he has plumped for a loose form of federalism which would give each group broad powers in areas of their "own affairs." De Klerk has also failed to offer anything that would lead to redistributing land (16 percent of the population owns 87 percent of the land) or economic power. On the contrary, he has demanded the privatization of national industry so that it will remain in white hands even if the government does not.

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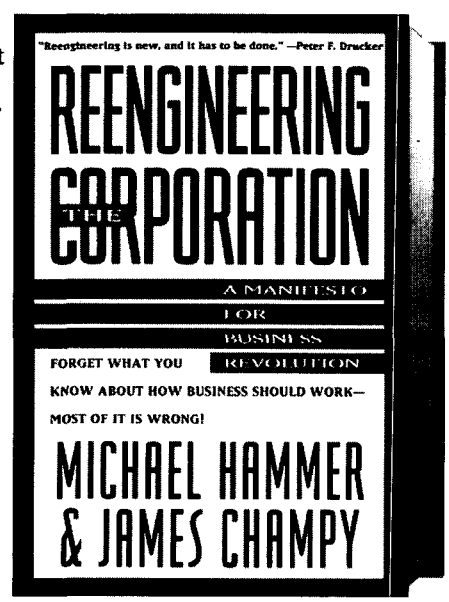

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So it is not surprising that negotiations have stalled. Mandela and the ANC would like a strong central government to oversee the redistribution of the fruits of Africa's wealthiest nation. De Klerk and the NP, realizing it's unlikely they will ever control the national government again, promote a loose federation of states, each with control over its own affairs so that the whites can retain their wealth and extravagant lifestyles. This is precisely the sort of stalemate that handshakes can't resolve.

Ryan Walsh is an intern at The Washington Monthly.

A History of Warfare
John Keegan
Alfred A. Knopf, $27.50
By John Lancaster

Don't be put off by the title; *A History of Warfare* is no dust-gathering desk reference. John Keegan has written a lively and comprehensive account of warmaking that succeeds on the strength of its provocative theme: Namely, Clausewitz was wrong.

Karl von Clausewitz was the 19th century Prussian general and military theorist who asserted that "war is a continuation of policy by other means." Politicians and generals have been invoking his convenient definition ever since, most recently during the Persian Gulf War. But Keegan, a British military historian and newspaperman, finds Clausewitz's thought "incomplete." War, he contends, is rooted in all kinds of motivations that have nothing to do with policy as it is conventionally understood in Washington or London. Alexander the Great, he writes, was driven to expand his empire by "vainglorious impulse." Others fought for gold, land, or simply for the hell of it. In the latter category, Keegan offers the example of Mongol conqueror Genghis Khan, who is reported to have defined "life's sweetest pleasure" as follows: "Man's greatest good fortune is to chase and defeat his enemy, seize his total possessions, leave his married women weeping and wailing, ride his gelding and [use] the bodies of his women as a nightshirt and support."

In some respects, Keegan's theme is not a revelation. One need only scan the latest newspaper stories from the former Yugoslavia to know that wars do not always have a rational basis. The most useful lesson of this book is that culture, not policy, is the determinant of how and why men fight. How else to explain the reaction of Japan's Samurai warriors to the introduction of firearms in the 16th century? Rather than embrace this technological advance, the Samurai saw it as a threat to the ritualistic swordplay that defined their profession. So they confiscated every gunpowder weapon in the country, a rare achievement in national disarmament that endured for 250 years.

Keegan gallops through history at the speed of a pillaging Cossack. In less than 400 pages, he takes us from the first spear-thrusting Neanderthal through the age of mutual assured destruction. There are sections on, among other things, the biological roots of aggression, "logistics and supply," and the geographic limits to warmaking.

A lesser writer might have pro-

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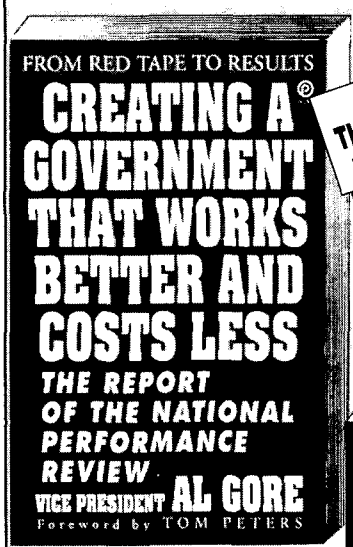

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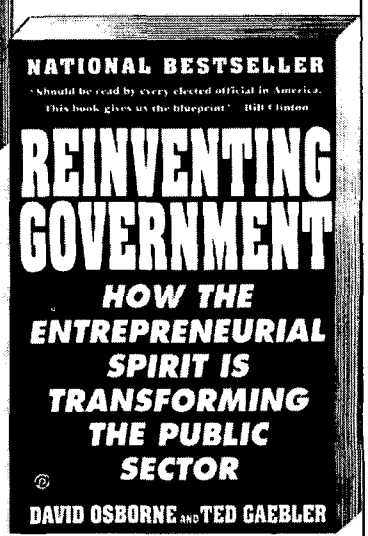

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duced an encyclopedia, but Keegan spices his narrative with enough vivid detail to keep things moving. Consider, for example, his description of chariot warfare around the middle of the second millennium B.C. "Circling at a distance of 100 to 200 yards from the herds of unarmored foot soldiers, a chariot crew—one to drive, one to shoot [arrows]—might have transfixed six men a minute. Ten minutes' work by ten chariots would cause 500 casualties or more, a Battle of the Somme-like toll among the small armies of the period."

For all the ancient history he covers, Keegan's main focus is closer to home. His animating premise is that Clausewitz was not only wrong but dangerous. In arguing that war and politics are part of the same continuum, Keegan writes, Clausewitz gave ideological cover to the reckless militarization of 19th century European society. Conscription armies became the norm, military service a male rite of passage. These trends combined with technological advances such as machine guns and rapid-fire artillery to produce the unparalleled slaughter of World War I. Clausewitz also gets much of the blame for World War II: "Revolutionary weapons, the warrior ethos, and the Clausewitzian philosophy of integrating military and political ends were to ensure that, under Hitler's hand, warmaking in Europe between 1939 and 1945 achieved a level of totality of which no previous leader. . . had ever dreamed." It was only the advent of nuclear weapons, Keegan writes, that "exposed the hollowness of the Clausewitzian analysis once and for all. How could war be an extension of politics, when the object of rational politics is to further the well-being of political entities?"

Keegan ends his book on a faint note of optimism. "All we need to accept is that, over the course of 4,000 years of experiment and repetition, warmaking has become a habit," he writes. Habits that are learned can also be unlearned: Keegan finds some evidence that the major powers may be starting to do so. Exhibit A is the growing preoccupation with multi-lateral peace-keeping operations of the sort now being contemplated for Bosnia-Herzegovina. Interestingly, Keegan cites as the most significant bright spot of recent years not nuclear disarmament or the Russian rejection of Marxism but the Soviet Union's decision, "in the last months of existence," to back the multi-national coalition that drove Iraq out of Kuwait in 1991.

Some readers will find Keegan's subject too broad to fit comfortably between two covers. My own view, however, is that he has largely succeeded in knitting together history's disparate strands. This is a valuable book for anyone trying to make sense of an increasingly disordered world—one that Clausewitz would never have understood.

John Lancaster covers the Pentagon for The Washington Post.

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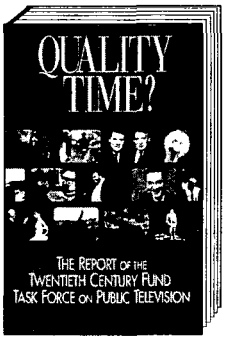

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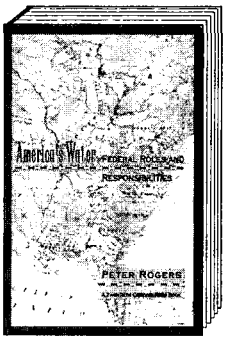

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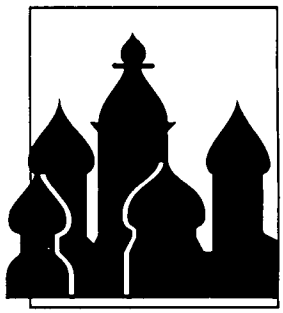

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